

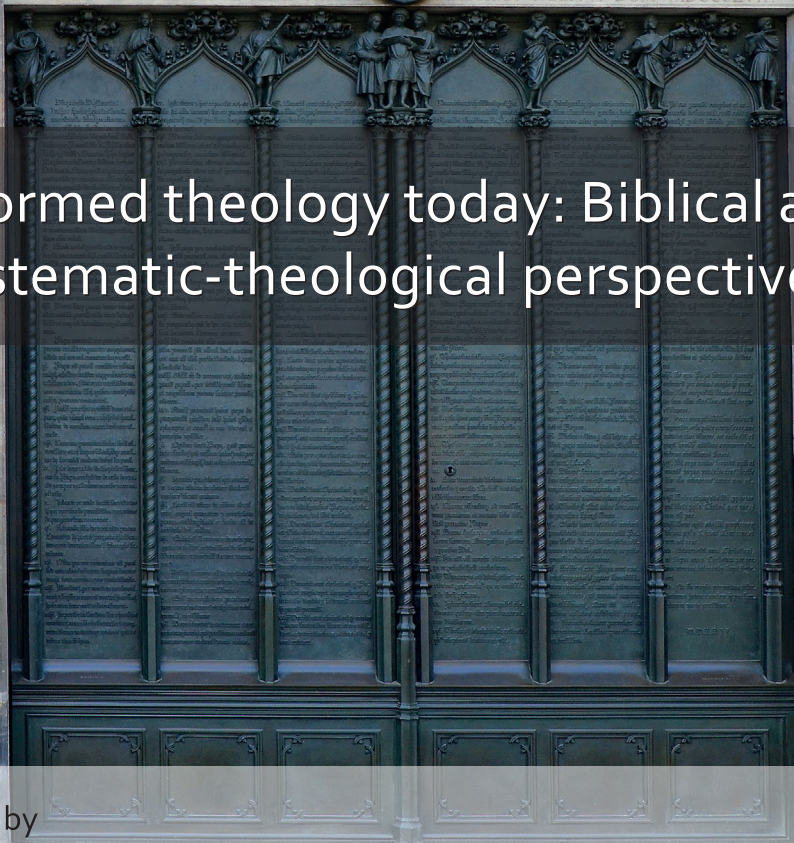


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# Reformed theology today: Biblical and systematic-theological perspectives



Edited by

Nico Vorster ■ Sarel P. van der Walt

**Reformed theology today:  
Biblical and systematic-  
theological perspectives**



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NICO VORSTER  
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## ■ Research Justification

This book contributes to an extensive number of scholarly works produced in 2017 which commemorate the scientific revolution and paradigm shift that occurred in 1517. The year 2017 marks the 500th celebration of the Reformation actuated by Martin Luther when he published what later became known as the *Ninety-Five Theses* on indulgences. The Reformation was a religious, social, cultural and political event that reshaped the landscape of modern Europe and has had an influence on parts of the world far beyond. This includes the 'far South' such as South Africa where the legacy of the Reformers has moulded institutional and individual lives across boundaries of ethnicity and beliefs. Worldwide celebrations of this quincentenary anniversary provide scholars with an opportunity to reflect anew on the consequences and lasting import of the Reformation.

This book provides one such a platform by discussing the scientific relevance of Reformed theology, specifically with regard to biblical, historical and systematic-theological themes. Comprising a collection of essays by scholars belonging to the Reformed tradition, it aims at examining the historical heritage of the Reformation, the current state of discourse in Reformed theology as well as the contemporary relevance of a Reformed approach to theology. It contains biblical, historical-theological and systematic-theological perspectives and addresses a variety of issues such as biblical interpretation, text-criticism, translation, constructive impulses emanating from classical Reformed thought, Christian freedom, anthropology and dialogue with non-Reformed traditions. Although the approaches followed are by no means exhaustive, they do provide the reader with some indication of approaches followed in Reformed discourse.

Chapters 1–4 pertain to biblical interpretation. A variety of methods are discussed and employed, namely the grammatical-historical, text-immanent, socio-historical, redactional-historical, diachronic and synchronic approaches. These analyses confirm that biblical interpretation requires a multi-faceted approach to biblical texts. Chapters 5–9, conversely, discuss various historical and systematic-theological themes. Classical texts from the Reformation, specifically works by Calvin and Luther, are examined, and contemporary theological literature are analysed, compared and evaluated while innovative new ideas are proposed.

This book is written in the reformed spirit of *semper Reformanda*. While it enters into dialogue with other traditions such as Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal, Roman Catholic and Lutheran theology, it also exhibits an attitude of self-reflection and self-correction. This contribution does not only affirm the Reformed heritage as a living tradition, but it also attempts to invigorate the tradition with innovating new ideas by drawing on classical and recent theological literature. The target audience is mainly Reformed theologians, but non-Reformed scholars, who are interested in engaging with the Reformed tradition, would find this book informative.

The contents of this book contain original research and no part of the book was plagiarised or published elsewhere.

**Prof. Nico Vorster & Dr Sarel P. van der Walt**

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# Abbreviations appearing in the Text and Notes

BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
IRTI	International Reformed Theological Institute
KJV	King James Version
MT	Masoretic Text
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OG	Old Greek
OT	Old Testament
RCSA	Reformed Churches of South Africa
TCUC	‘Towards a common understanding of the church’, second theme of conversations by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
CCCW	‘The church as community of common witness to the kingdom of God’, third theme of conversations by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity
PCCW	‘The presence of Christ in church and world’, first theme of conversations by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity



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# Foreword

This book is the first of two volumes that consider the state and relevance of Reformed theology today in light of the 500-year celebration of the Reformation in 2017. It contains biblical, historical-theological and systematic-theological perspectives on Reformed theology and is specifically aimed at discussing the contemporary relevance of a Reformed theological approach. Though the themes are wide-ranging and by no means exhaustive, it will give the reader a sense of the current debates in Reformed circles and the various approaches followed to address contemporary issues.

True to the Reformed slogan of *sola scriptura*, Chapters 1–4 deal with biblical interpretation and methodology. Issues such as the text-critical method and Bible translation, the redaction history of Daniel, the applicability of socio-historical considerations in biblical interpretation and applicable interpretative approaches to the Synoptic Gospels are debated.

In Chapter 1, Herrie van Rooy discusses the importance of textual criticism in studying the transmission of the Old Testament text. He identifies a number of important principles in this regard and then applies them concretely to a number of texts from the Book of Ezekiel. Van Rooy argues that textual-critical considerations are highly important in Bible-translation projects and that the new direct Afrikaans translation's use of footnotes to explain textual-critical choices is a step in the right direction.

Hennie Goede discusses in Chapter 2 the role of socio-historic considerations in Reformed exegesis. He holds that socio-historic considerations are important but not determinative in understanding the biblical texts since the exegete needs to take into account a wide variety of factors of which socio-historic considerations is only one, when interpreting the Bible. Goede warns against the extremes of either neglecting socio-historic factors or relying too much on such considerations.

Chapter 3 investigates the use of historical, text-immanent and sociological methods in the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels. After examining the various methods, Francois Viljoen concludes that a multifaceted approach that utilises all of the methods has value in combining diachronic and synchronic approaches and in complementing the various weaknesses that each method displays. Yet, discernment is necessary in cases where the results of the various interpretation techniques stand in conflict with each other.



Hans van Deventer treats the redactional development of the book Daniel in Chapter 4. He follows the work of Noll in arguing that the development of religious canons were part of social processes that aimed to create identity during times of existential crisis.

In the spirit of *semper Reformanda*, Chapters 5–9 discuss various historical-theological and systematic-theological topics such as the 16th-century debates between the Calvinists and Anabaptists, the historical effects of important events during 1516, Luther's concept of paradoxical freedom and the contemporary relevance of Calvin's theocentric approach to anthropology.

In Chapter 5, Callie Coetzee revisits the debates between the Calvinists and Anabaptists and asks whether the debate is still relevant today. After examining the doctrines of the Anabaptists and Calvin's response to them, he concludes that the debate is still relevant. Not only have various confessions in the Reformed tradition originated against the backdrop of the debate between the Calvinists and Anabaptists, but Anabaptist doctrines are, according to Coetzee, resurfacing today in the form of Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism.

Benno Zuiddam deals in Chapter 6 with events in 1516 that had a decisive impact on Western intellectual history, namely the publication of Jerome Bosch's *Haywain* that produced a severe critique of 16th-century church and society, Martin Luther's lectures on Romans that emphasised the importance of personal salvation, Luther's receiving the first copy of the Greek New Testament, as well as the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia* that sought the reconstruction of society based on reason and natural law. Zuiddam argues that these developments had a profound influence in the development of both Western individualism and the notion of a government-centred society.

Chapter 7 provides an interesting comparison of the concept of 'freedom' in Luther and Dostoevsky. Paul Kruger discusses the paradoxical nature of Luther's understanding of freedom and how this approach was reawakened in Dostoevsky's *Grand Inquisitor*. Kruger asks whether Luther's paradoxical notion of freedom can be reframed in an eschatological mode. His thesis is that the retrieval of Luther's notion of freedom is possible if we take a cue from Dostoevsky's prophetic view and understand freedom as a gift from the future.

Nico Vorster examines in Chapter 8 the theocentric premises of Calvin's theological anthropology and the implications thereof for modern anthropologies. He argues that Calvin's theocentric approach decentres the human being and locates the meaning of human existence outside the human in God himself. Calvin's theocentric approach safeguards theological anthropology against the extremes of both dualism and monism while also avoiding the pitfalls of anthropocentrism and collectivism. His notion of human existence as eccentric provides theologians with promising avenues to develop an eco-sensitive anthropology and a hopeful eschatological outlook on life.

The last chapter deals with the dialogue between the Roman Catholic tradition and the Reformed tradition 500 years after the Reformation. Conrad Wethmar discusses three report documents that resulted from three extensive series of ecumenical dialogues held between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church since the 1970s. He asks the question: How have the traditional ecclesiologies of the two traditions been influenced by these discussions. Wethmar suggests that both Reformed and Catholic ecclesiology might find an avenue in Christology to overcome their differences.


We trust that readers will find this volume informative and that it will invigorate reflections on Reformed theology. We express a word of thanks to all the contributors who submitted chapters, reworked their versions after receiving the comments of the peer reviewers and presented the final chapters in time for publication. We also express our appreciation to Ms Bertha Oberholzer and AOSIS for finalising this volume as well as to the Pro-Reformando Trust for funding this project.

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# The text of the Old Testament and Bible translation<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

It is well known that Reformers such as Luther and Calvin followed the humanists of the 16th century by going back to the original languages of the Bible, reading the Old Testament (OT) in Hebrew and the New Testament (NT) in Greek. This approach had, and still has, important implications for the translation of the Bible in the broad Reformed tradition. However, since the time of the Reformation, great strides have been made in the study of the history and transmission of the original texts of the Bible. As far as the OT is concerned,

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the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed the thinking on the text of the OT fundamentally. The question to be answered in this contribution is whether the developments in the textual criticism of the OT have also altered the approach to the text of the OT and its translation for people who stand on the shoulders of the Reformers. The first part of the chapter discusses the necessity of textual criticism, using a number of problematic examples. The second part discusses recent developments in the study of the transmission of the text of the OT as well as textual criticism of the text of the OT. This is followed by stating some principles in this regard and applying them to a number of texts from the book of Ezekiel in the final section of the chapter.

## ■ The necessity of textual criticism for translation and exegesis

In the third edition of his book *Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Emmanuel Tov (2012b) presents a survey of the problems that necessitate textual criticism as well as of the development of the discipline since the discovery of the scrolls from Qumran and its vicinity. In his discussion of the necessity of textual criticism, Tov uses three texts to illustrate the problem.

The first one is 1 Samuel 13:1 (Tov 2012b:10–11). The Hebrew read as follows:

בְּיָמֵי שָׁמֶר שָׂאֵל בְּמִלְכוֹ וַיְהִי שְׁנַיִם מְלָךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל

The formula used here is the customary one used in the books of Kings as part of an introduction to the reign of a specific king. It can be compared with the formula used at the beginning of the reign of Ahaz in 2 Kings 16:2:

בְּיָמֵי אֲחָז בְּמִלְכוֹ וַיְהִי שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר שָׁנָה מְלָךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם

In the second instance, the meaning is quite clear, ‘Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for 26 years.’ However, if the text from 1 Samuel is translated similarly, the problem is evident, ‘Saul was a year old when he became king, and he ruled over Israel for two years.’ The problem can be solved in different ways. The text-critical notes to this verse in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) state that the verse is omitted from the Old Greek, but some later Greek manuscripts give the age as 30 years. The Peshitta gives the age as 21 while it omits the reference to the length of Saul’s reign (cf. Dietrich 2015:3–4, 26; Klein 1983:122). Klein (1983:124–125) says that the problem related to the length of Saul’s reign is historical, not textual. The question is whether the events of 1 Samuel 13–31 can be fitted into two years. Dietrich (2015:37–39) discusses the most important theories regarding the length of Saul’s reign and prefers the idea that the two years may refer to only a part of Saul’s reign, namely the time from when he became king (1 Sm 13) until when he was

told that the kingship would be taken away from him (1 Sm 15). The two problems in the text have been explained in different ways, but for the purpose of this chapter, the way in which translations dealt with this verse is highly relevant.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) reads, ‘Saul was ... years old when he began to reign; and he reigned ... and two years over Israel.’ In a footnote to the first problem, it says that the number is lacking in the Hebrew and in a footnote to the second, it says that the number is incomplete in the Hebrew. Some translations, such as the New Dutch translation of 2004, accept the number ‘30’ for solving the first problem, following some Greek witnesses. Others try to circumvent the problem by translating the verse in a way not consistent with the normal use of the formula. Examples of the latter are the Afrikaans translation of 1953 (*Saul het ’n jaar geregeer. En toe hy twee jaar oor Israel geregeer het ...* [Saul reigned for a year. And after having reigned over Israel for two years ...]) and the Afrikaans translation of 1983 (*Saul het al ’n jaar of twee as koning oor Israel geregeer ...* [Saul had already been reigning as king of Israel for a year or two ...]). Luther (1545) followed this solution in his translation of this verse (*Saul war ein jar König gewesen, / vnd da er zwey jar vber Jsrael regiert hatte ...*). Calvin’s (1886:5) translation follows the Hebrew closely, ‘*Filius unius anni erat Saul, quum regnare coepisset, duobus autem annis regnavit super Israel*’ [Saul was a son of one year when he began to reign; he reigned for two years over Israel]. Calvin (1886:5–7) has a long discussion of the text but concludes that the explanation is very simple. His interpretation concurs with the already existing translation of Luther, ‘*nam textus istius sensus hic est simplicissimus, Saulem unum tantum annum adhuc regnavisse, quum ipsi regnum est confirmatum, ut supra vidimus: deinde biennium regnasse donec ea quae deinceps sunt recitanda contigissent*’ [The meaning of this text is quite evident. Up to this stage Saul has reigned for one year, during which his reign was established. Then, in the second year of his reign, the things mentioned following on this, happened] (Calvin 1886:7).

The second example that Tov (2012b:11) discusses is found in Judges 16:2. Verse 1 and the first two words of verse 2 are as follows:

- 1       :וַיֵּלֶךְ שָׁמְשׁוֹן עֵזְתָּה וַיֵּרָא־שָׁם אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה וַיִּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ:  
2       לְעֵזְתָּיִם לְאִמֶּר

[Samson went to Gaza and there he saw a prostitute and he went into her. To the people of Gaza, saying ...]

It is probable that a verb is lacking at the beginning of verse 2, for instance, ‘It was reported.’ The BHS says in a footnote that the Septuagint has a verb at the beginning of the verse (καὶ ἀπηγγέλη [it was announced]). Gross (2009:646–647) rejects the proposal by Barthélemy and others to retain the Masoretic Text (MT), saying that the omission of a verb of speaking here must be an old transmission error in the Hebrew. What the BHS does not say is that both the Targum and the Peshitta have a similar

addition at the beginning of the verse ('It was said' in the Peshitta and 'It was announced' in the Targum). The Vulgate has a longer addition that is not mentioned by BHS, '*quod cum audissent Philisthim et percreebruisset apud eos...*' [And when the Philistines had heard this, and it was noised about amongst them ...]. Gross (2009:647) refers to this variety in the ancient versions and says that it points to the antiquity of the omission in the Hebrew. Luther follows the example of these ancient versions (not the Vulgate), '*Da ward den Geistern gesagt.*' Most modern translations do the same with (Afrikaans 1953) or without (Afrikaans 1983) an indication that the verb does not occur in the Hebrew.

The third example to which Tov (2012b:11) refers occurs in Jeremiah 27:1. The Hebrew begins with a reference to king Jehoiakim (In the first year of the reign of king Jehoiakim):

בְּרֵאשִׁית מַמְלַכְתּוֹ יְהוֹיָקִים בֶּן־יִיאֲשֻׁנְהוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה

Verse 3, however, indicates that the message was not meant for Jehoiakim but rather for Zedekiah. The BHS has a note saying that one should read Zedekiah with a number of Hebrew manuscripts, the Peshitta and the Arabic translation. It wants to date the prophecy in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

Many translations keep Jehoiakim. Examples are the *Lutherbibel* (Luther 1545) and the Dutch translation of 2004. Others change the name to Zedekiah, such as the NRSV (with a note about Jehoiakim), the Afrikaans translations of 1953 (with a cross-reference to vv. 3, 12 and 20 and Jr 28:1) and 1983 (with a note that the Hebrew has Jehoiakim and a reference to v. 3). Calvin (1852:375–376) retains the reference to Jehoiakim. However, he says that the prophet received the message in the time of Jehoiakim but had to deliver it to Zedekiah at a later stage. Oosterhoff (1994:361) rejects this view of Calvin. His opinion is that the heading was taken over from Jeremiah 26:1 and that it was correctly omitted by the Septuagint. Holladay (1989:112) emends the verse in agreement with this view, saying that the heading of Jeremiah 28:1 refers to an incident immediately subsequent to the one described in Jeremiah 27. Fischer (2005:44, 49–51) chooses not to emend the Hebrew. He is of the opinion that the whole chapter must not be dated at one specific time, suggesting the reference to Zedekiah in verse 3 to be a second new dating in the chapter.

These three examples, and the way in which they were dealt with in translations, are sufficient to explain the importance of textual criticism for the Hebrew OT and its translation.

## ■ The text of the Old Testament and textual criticism

O'Sullivan (2000:1) states that one of the basic principles of the Reformation, *sola scriptura*, necessitates two things, namely studying the biblical texts in the original languages and



providing translations of the Bible into the languages of the ordinary people. In translating the Bible, the translator has to start with the original languages. This point of departure entails two facets, namely determining the ‘correct’ reading of the text and the meaning of the text. Pelikan (1996) explains:

A translator faithful to the principles of the Reformation had to be an exegete first, using the tools of sacred philology in Hebrew and Greek to discover the correct reading of the text and then its correct meaning. (p. 41)

These steps will be followed by a rendering of the biblical text into the language of the people. According to Pelikan (1996:43a), a guiding principle for Luther was the following question, ‘[h]ow does a German speak in such a case?’ This does indeed sound quite modern as a principle for the way a translation is phrased in the target language. In their emphasis on the return to the original languages, the Reformers followed in the footsteps of the humanists of the early 16th century (Bedoulle 1999).

Luther emphasises the study of the ancient languages in many of his works. The principle is especially clear from his argument in favour of establishing schools for children (Aland 1963:70–78). He claims that Augustine and other early fathers frequently erred in their interpretation of the Bible because they did not know the ancient languages (Aland 1963:74). They were like blind men in a wood because of their lack of knowledge. In his interpretation of passages from the OT, he frequently refers to the Hebrew way of saying something. There are many examples of these references throughout his interpretations in the edition of Aland (1963).

As far as the OT is concerned, one can ask which Hebrew texts of the OT were available to the Reformers. Mulder (1988:116–121, 123–126) discusses the earliest printed versions of the Hebrew Bible as well as the earliest scholarly editions. At the time of Luther and Calvin, three important versions or recensions of the Hebrew Bible can be distinguished. One of them is the Brescia edition of 1484, published by Gershom Soncino, with the Hebrew vowels and accents. This edition was the one that Luther used for his translation of the OT, and as Mulder (1988:124) indicates, it became the basis for the later editions of Robert Estienne (1539; 1544–1546) and Sebastian Munster (1535). The second important edition was the second Rabbinic Bible of Ben Hayyim, published in Vienna in 1524–1525 (Mulder 1988:119–121, 124). This edition included the Masora and was the source for later editions of the Hebrew Bible, up to and including the second edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* of Kittel (Tov 2012b:351). This edition also included Targums, such as Targum Onkelos for the Pentateuch and Targum Jonathan for the prophets, as well as rabbinic commentaries. The third important publication was the Complutensian Polyglot, published between 1514 and 1517 (Mulder 1988:118). It contained the Hebrew text, the Vulgate and the Septuagint as well as some books of the Targum. Luther used the Brescia edition for his translation, and Calvin probably also used this edition as well as one of the editions based on it. Because of the Jewish and

Catholic background of the other two printed editions, it is improbable that they played a role in the work of the two great Reformers.

As far as the transmission of the text of the OT is concerned, Calvin emphasises just how faithful the documents of the OT are. He regards Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. In his view, God took care to have the OT transmitted by the Jews, whom he calls the librarians of the Christian Church following St. Augustine (*Inst.* 1.8.10).

However, since the time of the Reformation, great strides have been made in the study of the history and transmission of the original texts of the Bible. It is impossible to discuss the developments in textual criticism and the views on the origin and transmission of the Hebrew Bible in detail here (cf. Mulder 1988:104 and especially Tov 2012b:155–190 for a detailed discussion). This chapter rather focuses on the impact of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls on theories regarding the development of the Hebrew text of the OT.

Tov (2012b:155) correctly emphasises the changes in the views concerning the development of the text of the OT that were brought about by the discovery of the scrolls in the Judean desert from 1947 onwards. Before 1947, theories about the development of the text of the OT were based on the differences between the three texts of the OT that were available to researchers and transmitted in different circles. The texts were the Hebrew text (transmitted by Jews), the Septuagint (translated by Jews but mainly transmitted by the church) and the Samaritan Pentateuch. In the time before 1947, the theories of Kahle and De Lagarde were dominant. Kahle wanted to posit the existence of an *Urtext* at the beginning of the process of transmission while De Lagarde rejected this idea in favour of a theory of multiple original texts (cf. Mulder 1988:99–101; Tov 2012b:171–173). After 1947, the discoveries of manuscripts in Qumran and its vicinity led Cross to develop a theory of local texts (cf. Mulder 1988:101–102; Tov 2012b:173–174):

- A Palestinian form, represented by the Samaritan Pentateuch and some Qumran manuscripts.
- An Egyptian form, represented by the Septuagint.
- A Babylonian form, represented by the MT.

Although not accepted by all scholars, the view of Tov (2012b) is very influential in the current views on the development of the text of the OT. Being influenced by a classification of the scrolls from the Judean Desert, he distinguishes four groups of manuscripts (2012b:107–110):

- MT-like texts that form the largest part of the scrolls and reflect the same tradition as the MT at an earlier stage.
- Pre-Samaritan texts that contain readings close to the Samaritan texts but without the ideological readings of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

- Texts that are close to the Hebrew source text(s) of the Septuagint.
- Non-aligned texts that do not form a close-knit group of which each one deviates from the other three groups.

Because of the above-mentioned facts and other factors, Tov (2012b:158–160) does not accept the idea of text types, such as in the local text theory of Cross, but he prefers to speak only of texts. The three main groups of texts (Masoretic, Septuagint and Samaritan or Palestinian) were part of a much larger number of texts circulating at the time of the Qumran community. He also does not accept the idea of standardisation of the biblical text at the end of the 1st century CE (Tov 2012b:74–180). The Masoretic group of texts had a fairly stable form from very early on. After the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, the other texts disappeared, and texts from the Masoretic type are the only ones that remained. The fact that these were the kinds of text transmitted from that time onwards, he describes as ‘a mere coincidence’ or ‘merely the result of historical events’ (Tov 2012b:179).

Although the contribution of Tov, as discussed above, is very influential, some of the variety of views that still exist can be seen in five articles published in one volume in 2012 (Crawford 2012; Fuller 2012; Tov 2012a; Ulrich 2012; Van der Kooij 2012). Tov’s contribution (2012a) to the publication gives a summary of his views as discussed above. Fuller (2012) presents a survey of the kind of manuscripts found at Qumran and its surroundings, their use of important editions of the Hebrew Bible and the views of some scholars on the new insights brought by these manuscripts into the history of the text of the Hebrew Bible.

The contribution of Ulrich (2012) is quite important. He is of the opinion that the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls replace the MT as the best guide to what the Hebrew Bible looked like at the time of the origin of rabbinical Judaism and Christianity (Ulrich 2012:54). Because of these finds, the MT must be regarded as equal in status to the other witnesses. Ulrich does not dispute the special position of the MT in Jewish religion. It still has pride of place as a witness to the Hebrew Bible from the period after the Second Jewish Revolt (Ulrich 2012:54). The MT does not represent a standardised text of the rabbis, but it was all that was left after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Ulrich 2012:55). Ulrich does not accept the idea that the MT can be regarded as the text of the temple priests of Jerusalem (contra Tov and Van der Kooij) (Ulrich 2012:56). Hence, the MT is textually no better than the texts of the manuscripts found at Qumran or the texts used by the translators of the Septuagint (Ulrich 2012:57). The MT represents one witness for each book in the Hebrew Bible while there were more witnesses in circulation at the time of the production of the scrolls (Ulrich 2012:58).

Van der Kooij is in favour of the idea that the MT (and texts similar to it) can be traced back to an official copy of the Hebrew Bible preserved at the temple by priests. To support this view, he discusses remarks in the Bible itself, in rabbinic sources, in the works of Josephus and in other texts (Van der Kooij 2012:31–7). His conclusion is that

this temple text was preserved and transmitted with great care and was probably regarded as the official text (Van der Kooij 2012:37). Of this text, conservative and free copies could have been made with the latter being the reason for the variety of texts found at Qumran and other places (Van der Kooij 2012:38–40). He does not accept the idea of a standardisation of the text in the centuries before the Common Era or in the 1st century CE.

Crawford has a very good discussion of the contributions of Cross, Talmon, Tov and Ulrich, making their different approaches quite clear. She is, however, careful of an overreliance on the three texts related to later circles, namely the MT, the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch (Crawford 2012:66). She prefers to start at the beginning of the process of textual transmission and not at the later development, which links certain textual forms to later religious communities. She (Crawford 2012:66) wants to accept that each biblical book reached a final shape at the end of the editorial process. The shape was fixed; the text inside the shape was not. She also agrees with Tov and Ulrich in distinguishing two kinds of scribal practices, one more exact and one more free (Crawford 2012). The more exact approach would copy the text faithfully while the more free approach would be open to editing the text, even substantially, as is the case with especially Jeremiah. These different scribal practices were applied to all the books in the Hebrew Bible. She is not in favour of Tov's term *proto-Masoretic* for a certain category of texts as it gives priority to one set of texts (Crawford 2012:66–67). One must note that Tov has stopped using this term in favour of MT-like texts. Crawford argues that this group is not uniform as the two kinds of scribal practices were applied to all the biblical books. Some of the books in the MT are examples of the more exact approach, such as the Pentateuch. However, other books in the MT are representatives of the more free approach, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which are expanded versions (Crawford 2012:67).

## ■ Textual criticism and Bible translation

At present, the Bible Society of South Africa is working on a new Afrikaans translation of the Bible. The background and history of the project as well as the theoretical framework and methodology are discussed in detail by Van der Merwe (2012; 2014). After long deliberations, the aim of this translation was formulated as follows (Van der Merwe 2012):

Create a clearly understandable, source text oriented Afrikaans translation of the Bible that is suitable for reading and use in church services, as well as catechism, Bible study and personal use. (p. 6)

In this process, the translators had to make decisions about the source text to be translated. As far as the text of the OT is concerned, it was decided to use the BHS as the source text.

This project affords one the chance to discuss some basic principles with regard to the text of the OT, its transmission and the application of textual criticism.<sup>2</sup> Some principles are stated below:

- The authoritative text of the OT is that of the autographs to which we do not have recourse. This statement is based on the theories of De Lagarde and Tov, as discussed above, that the existence of a final copy of a specific book must be taken as a premise.
- In the transmission of this text, errors or changes were made. The aim of textual criticism of the Hebrew OT is to reconstruct a Hebrew text by using a sound methodology and by going back as far as possible into the history of the transmission of the text.
- In the transmission of the text, a certain fluidity existed, causing a variety in the witnesses to the text of the OT.
- Translators and a faith community can make different valid choices regarding the text to be translated, such as choosing the MT, the Septuagint or the Vulgate.
- Since the time of the Reformation, the choice in the Reformed tradition has been to translate the MT.
- In instances where the MT is unproblematic, this text will usually be translated. This principle rejects the idea of emendations where the MT does not present any specific problems, especially in those instances where the other textual witnesses support the reading of the MT. In the instances where other witnesses differ from the MT and the MT and the other witnesses have readings that are equally possible, the reading of the MT will be accepted, except where a very strong case can be made out to accept a different reading. However, one must be open to the rare possibility that internal evidence may point to a problem in the MT itself that goes back to an error or change made in the transmission even before the time of the translation of the Septuagint.
- In instances where the MT presents a problem, internal and external evidence is used. As far as external evidence is concerned, special attention is given to Hebrew evidence such as the manuscripts from the Dead Sea and vicinity and the Samaritan Pentateuch. However, this does not imply the inherent superiority of such evidence. Variants from the ancient versions must also be taken into consideration.
- All textual variants should be evaluated, and priority should be given to readings that can be used to explain variant readings, for example in the case of the confusion of similar letters or the metathesis of letters.

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2. Although I am a member of the Editorial Committee for the OT of this project, the views in this chapter are my own and should not be ascribed to the Bible Society of South Africa, the translation project or the Editorial Committee.

- In instances where the reading accepted differs from the reading of the MT, footnotes can be used in the translation to explain the problem in the MT and the choice.

## ■ Some examples from Ezekiel

In this section, a number of examples from the Book of Ezekiel are discussed to elucidate the application of the principles. Ezekiel is chosen because this book is one of the instances in the OT where the MT and the Septuagint represent different traditions (cf. Tov 2012b:299–301).

## ■ The double divine name

A well-known phenomenon in the text of Ezekiel is the prophet's use of the double divine name, אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה. This is frequently rendered by a single κύριος in the Septuagint. The discussion frequently revolves around the question whether the original had just the one name, as rendered by the Septuagint, or whether it had the double name. Furthermore, scholars ask whether the use of one name in the Septuagint is a matter of translation (cf. Block 1997:116 note 18; McGregor 1985:57–93; Zimmerli 1983:556–562). This problem cannot be discussed here in detail, but the question is how this should be addressed in a translation of the book. In light of the principle that the MT should be translated where it offers no problem, even if other witnesses have variant readings, the double divine name should be retained. However, the translators then still have to decide how to translate it. The NIV translates it with 'sovereign Lord', the NRSV version with 'the Lord God', the 1953 Afrikaans translation with '*die Here*' [the Lord LORD], the 1983 Afrikaans translation with '*die Here God*' [the Lord God] and the Dutch translation of 2004 with '*God, de HEER*' [God, the LORD]. For the new Afrikaans version, the current rendering is '*my Heer, die Here*' [my Lord, the LORD]. The rendering of the divine names in the OT should thus be explained in an introduction to a translation.

There are many other examples where the Septuagint has omitted a single word that occurs in the Hebrew and where one would retain the word in translation (e.g. Ezk 1:22 [awesome]).

## ■ Different editions

It is currently generally accepted that the MT and the Septuagint represent two different editorial layers of the book. The MT is regarded as the second, expanded edition (cf. Tov 2012b:299–301). The omission of Ezekiel 12:26–28, 32:25–26 and 36:23c–38 in Papyrus

967 is taken by some scholars as evidence of such an edition. The clearest example, however, is the differences between the MT and the Septuagint of Ezekiel 7:1–11 (cf. Bogaert 1986; Lust 1986:17–20).

In cases like these, thus also in the book of Jeremiah, in which there are even more major differences between the MT and the Septuagint, the principles mentioned above would prefer the MT and translate it with the normal attention to text-critical issues where applicable. This would also apply to variants, for example in Ezekiel 1:22, 27; 3:18; 5:14, 15 and 8:3.

## ■ Ezekiel 1:11: ‘And their faces’

In Ezekiel 1:11, the word **וּפְנֵיהֶם** occurs at the beginning of the verse. It is omitted in the Septuagint. The rest of the verse deals with the wings of the creatures in the vision. Tov (2012b:325) regards the insertion of **וּפְנֵיהֶם** as part of the revision of Ezekiel found in the MT as an expanded version of Ezekiel.

Most commentators regard the word as an insertion taken from the end of verse 8 (cf. Allen 1994:6; Block 1997:94 note 35; Zimmerli 1979:84). In his commentary on this verse, Calvin (1849:55) retains the word and says that it means that the faces and the wings were extended. The NIV also retains it and turns it into a separate sentence, ‘[s]uch were their faces’. The Dutch translation of 2004 does the same, ‘[d]at waren hun gezichten’ [such were their faces]. The NRSV also retains the word but links it to the previous verse. The Afrikaans translations of 1953 and 1983, however, omit the word and begin the verse with the reference to the wings of the creatures. In light of the principles above, it will probably be best to retain the word, perhaps in the way of the NRSV by linking it to the previous verse. In this instance, a footnote referring to the word’s omission in the Septuagint and other translations will be valuable.

## ■ Ezekiel 3:12: Rise or glory?

This verse contains an example of the rare phenomenon where the MT and the ancient versions agree but where internal evidence points to a problem in the text. The MT of the verse reads as follows:

וַתִּשְׁאַגֵּי רוּחַ וְאַשְׁמַע אֶחְרָי קוֹל רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל בְּרוּחַ כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ

The problem relates to the doxology directed at the glory of the Lord. Different translations treat the verse in two different ways. Some retain the doxology:

- NIV: ‘May the glory of the Lord be praised in his dwelling place!’
- Dutch 2004: ‘*De luister van de HEER zij geloofd in zijn woning!*’

- Afrikaans 1953: *'Geloof sy die heerlikheid van die HERE uit sy woonplek!*  
Others translate the verse differently, accepting a text-critical suggestion of BHS:
- NRSV: '[A]nd as the glory of the Lord rose from its place ...'
- Afrikaans 1983: *'Die hemel self moet die magtige verskyning van die Here loof!*

The suggestion by BHS entails reading a *mēm* in the Hebrew for a *kaf* in the consonantal text, namely כָּרוּם for כָּרוּךְ. This proposal is accepted by many commentators that point out why a doxology is problematic at this point in the text (e.g. Block 1997:132, 134–135; Tov 2012b:332; Zimmerli 1979:94). Block (1979:135) supports the emendation by referring to the form of these two Hebrew letters in the Old Hebrew script where they can easily be confused. The error is then a very old one, from the time before the switch from the archaic script to the square script. This would also explain why the error was repeated in the ancient versions. In this instance, the emendation can be accepted, but a footnote should give a translation of the MT with an explanation of the confusion of the two Hebrew letters.

## ■ Typical errors in transmission: Ezekiel 1:20

Related to the discussion of Ezekiel 3:12 is the problem of typical errors in the transmission of a text (such as dittography or haplography). These should be dealt with in accordance with the normal procedures of textual criticism. In these instances, the versions can indeed play an important role. Ezekiel 1:20 contains an example of a typical error. The MT reads as follows:

עַל אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה-שֵׁם הַרוּחַ לְלֶכֶת יִלְכוּ שָׁמָּה הַרוּחַ לְלֶכֶת וְהָאוֹפָנִים יִנְשְׂאוּ לְעִמָּתָם כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בְּאוֹפָנִים:

The problem is related to the phrase שָׁמָּה הַרוּחַ לְלֶכֶת, which repeats words from the beginning of the verse with a small change in the adverb. BHS says in a footnote that the Septuagint has τὰ ζῶα [the living creatures] for these words and that the Peshitta omits it. It regards these words as an example of dittography and recommends that it be deleted. Although not mentioned by BHS, the Vulgate also omits these words. Zimmerli (1979:87) agrees with this omission. It is followed by the NIV, NRSV, Afrikaans 1983 and the Dutch translation of 2004. In an instance like this, the omission of words in a translation will be in order, but a footnote referring to the dittography should be inserted.

## ■ *Tiqqun sopherim*: Ezekiel 8:17

The Hebrew expression *tiqqun sopherim* means 'correction of the scribes'. These are variants that are ascribed to the ancient Jewish scribes and do not appear in Masoretic



manuscripts. The number of these corrections varies between eight and 16 in different sources. The corrections are purported to be changes made by the scribes to texts that could have been regarded as offensive to God. The age of these notes and the question whether they do indeed represent actual changes made by the scribes remain subjects of debate (cf. Tov 2012b:59–61). Most of these changes consist of only one or two consonants, and frequently, they relate to pronominal suffixes. One such example occurs in Ezekiel 8:17. The last part of the verse reads as follows:

וְהִנֵּם שְׂלֵחִים אֶת־הַיָּמִוּרָה אֶל־אַפָּם

This is translated as follows by NIV: ‘Look at them putting the branch to their nose!’

The correction of the scribes says that the suffix to ‘nose’ was originally first person singular, that is, my nose. To wave a branch before God was regarded as sacrilegious, and thus, the text was changed. The exact meaning of this rite is unclear (cf. Zimmerli 1979:244–245), but it was regarded as an insult to God. It is a question whether the text was indeed changed. Zimmerli (1979:221–222) and Block (1997:297) accept it as the original text while Allen (1994:121–122) does not. Calvin (1849:316) was aware of this proposal, namely that the rabbis changed the text because of reverence towards God. However, he rejects it. He wants to take the Hebrew word for nose as referring to wrath (as it can indeed be) with the third person plural suffix taken objectively. The text would then mean that the wrath of God would strike them. This is an interpretation showing that Calvin knew the Hebrew well but was also knowledgeable about the rabbinic tradition.

Some translations keep to the MT (NIV, NRSV, Afrikaans 1953 and 1983) while others follow the *tiqqun* (for example the Dutch 2004 translation, which is fairly free, ‘*zie hoe schaamteloos ze mij bespotten!*’). In this instance, it will probably be best to keep the reading of the MT in the translation. However, it might be prudent to add a footnote with the variant reading and a brief explanation, and perhaps an entry in a word list at the end of the translation. Each of the *tiqqunne sopherim* will have to be dealt with on its own merits.

## ■ Conclusion

The Reformers Luther and Calvin urged churches to go back to the original languages when studying and translating the Bible. The exhortation has made the study of the Hebrew Bible, particularly of the Hebrew OT, an important part of theology in general. The development of textual criticism since the Reformation and the availability of new sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls brought about a major shift in thinking about the history of the text of the OT. In this chapter, the importance of textual criticism and the development of textual criticism were briefly discussed. Some important principles in the

study of the text of the OT, especially for Bible translation, were defined and illustrated with a discussion of a number of examples from the book of Ezekiel. This discussion emphasised the importance of taking cognisance of the new developments regarding the text of the OT and its importance for Bible translation projects. In the new direct translation in Afrikaans, the use of footnotes to explain textual-critical issues is a step in the right direction.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 1

Reformers such as Luther and Calvin emphasised the importance of studying the Bible in the original languages. This approach has important implications for the translation of the Bible in the broad Reformed tradition. Since the time of the Reformation, great strides have been made in the study of the history and transmission of the original texts of the Bible. As far as the OT is concerned, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed the thinking on the text of the OT fundamentally. The first part of the chapter discusses the necessity of textual criticism, using a number of problematic examples. The second part discusses recent developments in the study of the transmission of the text of the OT and textual criticism. This is followed by stating some principles in this regard and applying them to a number of texts from the Book of Ezekiel in the final section of the chapter. This discussion emphasises the importance of taking cognisance of the new developments regarding the text of the OT and its importance for new Bible translation projects. In the new direct translation in Afrikaans, the use of footnotes to explain textual-critical issues is considered a step in the right direction.

# The role of socio-historical context in reformed exegesis: Indispensable yet not determinative

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## Introduction

Reformed exegesis has a long history dating back to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, and before that to the early church fathers in Antioch. The socio-historical investigation and study of the biblical text has always been an integral part of such an approach to understanding the biblical message. In recent times, this aspect of exegesis has become more prominent in the light of new discoveries regarding the socio-historical context of the Bible and new methods employed to study such discoveries. In celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, this chapter investigates the role and place of the socio-historical context in reformed exegesis. There seems to have been a

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shift in some Reformed circles, moving to either a neglect of socio-historical context as an integral part of the exegetical process or to an overreliance on socio-historical constructs in the understanding of Scripture. Based on the reformed principle of *sola scriptura* and the reformer John Calvin's use of the socio-historical context in his understanding of the biblical text, this chapter argues for a balanced view on the role of the socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis. This argument is based on the principle that the socio-historical context is indispensable yet not determinative in understanding the text. Two examples from the ecclesiastical debate illustrate this conclusion.

## ■ Method

This chapter attempts to shed light on the problem stated above by focusing on the role of the socio-historical context of the biblical text in the light of the Reformed principle of *sola scriptura*, John Calvin's use of the socio-historical context in his exegesis as a model for Reformed exegesis and the role of the socio-historical context of the biblical text in Reformed exegesis today. The investigation is literature-based and engages critically with such literature with the aim to formulate guidelines for the proper and balanced use of socio-historical constructs in exegesis, based on the principles espoused by the Reformers, in particular John Calvin. Such a proper and balanced use would encapsulate the principle that the socio-historical context of the text is indispensable in a proper understanding of the text, yet not determinative.

## ■ The role of socio-historical context in the understanding of the text in the light of the reformed principle of *sola scriptura*

The principle of *sola scriptura* states that, 'in matters of faith, we should look solely to God's will as revealed in the Bible, not the traditions of man' (cf. Daugherty 2012:137; Frame 1997:272). Kaiser (1982:171) expands the principle somewhat by stating that, 'the Bible alone contained all that was necessary for our salvation and manner of living.' Daugherty (2012:75) describes the principle as one of, 'the three most important ideas spawned by the reformers in sixteenth century Europe.' Pettegree (1999:245) states that the *sola scriptura* principle became, 'an intellectual cornerstone of the Reformation.' All the leading figures of the Reformation, and Protestants in general, subscribed to this principle in their interpretation of Scripture (cf. Noll 2012:183), including John Calvin (Selderhuis 2009:247). Their successors, including John Wesley, followed their lead (Noll 2012:219).

According to Needham (2004:84), Philip Melancthon suggested to Martin Luther that Christians should read and judge the early church fathers in the light of Scripture rather than

reading Scripture in the exclusive light of the fathers. Consequently, Luther used this argument in his disputation with Johann Eck in 1519, attempting to prove that neither Scripture nor the early church fathers supported the absolute supremacy of the pope (Needham 2004:80–81). This position became known as the principle of *sola scriptura*. By this, the Protestant Reformers meant that only the canonical Scriptures possess infallible authority in matters of faith (Needham 2004:82). Although other sources may be useful or even indispensable in our understanding of Scripture, they do not trump the authority of Scripture. The Reformers did not imply by *sola scriptura* that all other sources and authorities could be ignored, let alone despised. They continued to recognise the ‘rule of faith’ as best evidenced in the form of the Apostles’ Creed and other confessions, seeing it as a true and necessary summary of the basic content of Scripture, without ascribing divine inspiration or infallibility to it (Needham 2004:82). John Calvin subscribed to this view, using his *Institutes* as a guide or road map to understanding Scripture (Ward Holder 2006b:7). This position of the Reformers can be described as, ‘critical reverence for the history and traditions of the church’ over and against authoritarian reverence for the history and traditions of the church or little or no respect for the church’s history and traditions (Needham 2004:83–84). Calvin made constant reference in his commentaries to the doctrinal and exegetical traditions of the church (Ward Holder 2006b:111), clearly aligning himself with the first-mentioned tradition of his fellow Reformers rather than either of the alternatives.

## ■ Calvin’s use of socio-historical context in interpreting Scripture

Volumes and volumes have been written about John Calvin’s commentaries on the Bible and his *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. His method for interpreting Scripture has been analysed and dissected in as many publications. For the purposes of this chapter, his method will be summarised with particular reference to his use of the socio-historical context in understanding biblical writings. The Bible as Scripture was at the centre of Calvin’s theology, and subsequently, he placed great emphasis on Scripture being interpreted by Scripture and according to the rule of faith (Reventlow 2010:119; Ward Holder 2006b:108–110). Calvin’s method was also clearly Christological in nature: Christ is the source, goal, and soul of the law and thus of Scripture as a whole (Selderhuis 2009:242–243).

According to Zachman (2002:1), the claim has been made by historical-critical scholars that Calvin and other precritical exegetes ‘read the world in the context of the meaning generated by the narrative of Scripture’ rather than reading Scripture in its extra-scriptural context. If true, this claim would mean that Calvin understood Scripture without any reference to a world of meaning outside of it, be it ‘literary, historical, cultural, scientific, philosophical, or religious’ (Zachman 2002:1). Yet Calvin strictly adhered to the rules of philology and rhetoric which guided him to a contextual interpretation of Scripture, considering the

historical, argumentative and narrative context of every pericope (Leith 1971:337; Selderhuis 2009:243–244). According to him, even Messianic prophecies in the OT were firstly applicable to their immediate historical and cultural context and then demanded further development (Farrar 1961:346–347). Consequently, he disagreed with interpretations that neglected these aspects, for example the distinction between the letter and the spirit of the text and allegorical interpretation of the biblical text (Steinmetz 2006:282–284). Following the humanist tradition in which he trained (Reventlow 2010:116; Selderhuis 2009:140–141; Ward Holder 2006b:99), Calvin insisted on mastery of the original languages of the Bible as a prerequisite for a proper understanding of Scripture as well as a critical interest in questions relating to authorship and historical background (Steinmetz 2006:282). This becomes apparent in, for example, his commentary on Isaiah 6 where Calvin deals with the issue of king Uzziah's death, referring and objecting to the opinion of some interpreters that the king's death was a social death caused by leprosy rather than his physical death (cf. Calvin 1958:199–200; Steinmetz 1982:160–161).<sup>3</sup> Ward Holder (2006b:98) describes 'consciousness of particular context' as a hallmark of Calvin's exegetical endeavours, to the extent that the context frequently determines the meaning. To Calvin, context was all-important (Parker 1971:80). In his first commentaries, Calvin used different contextual tools, namely the flow of the argument of which the pericope forms part, aspects relating to the author and addressee(s) of the text, aspects relating to vocabulary and cultural aspects (Ward Holder 2006b:98–108). It is therefore clear that Calvin interpreted Scripture in light of its linguistic, cultural, historical and religious context (Kraus 1977:13–14; Zachman 2002:2). A further example is evident from Calvin's commentary on 1 Peter 3:19 where he considers the meaning of the word *φωλακή* in light of its usage by Greek authors (Calvin 1963:293).<sup>4</sup>

While he never shied away from historical questions (Ward Holder 2006a:247) but rather actively attempted to place the biblical text in its historical context (cf. De Greef 2006:92), Calvin never allowed these issues to govern his exegesis. On the contrary, on occasion he overruled the context based on the usefulness of the less-supported message (Ward Holder 2006b:107). Calvin also understood the meaning of the context by the interrelationship of the meanings of the individual parts (Parker 1971:80), leading to hermeneutical interaction between the parts and the context with the context as 'the final court of appeal' (Parker 1971:81). In his endeavour to establish the context of the biblical text, Calvin made use of ancient and contemporary sources available to him at the time, which were chiefly Greek and Hebrew biblical texts, grammars and dictionaries (Scalise 1989:23–24). As far as philological sources are concerned, he chiefly relied upon the work of Guillaume Budé (Parker 1971:81). Budé was the most learned classical scholar of his day, and Calvin was more than willing to take advantage of Budé's technical expertise (Parker 1971:147). For geographical, monetary and other socio-historical data on the 1st-

3. 'Some think that *death* here means *leprosy*, which undoubtedly was a civil death, [...] but I choose rather to take *death* in its literal sense' [Calvin 1958:199–200].

4. 'It seems to that *φωλακή* rather means a watch-tower ... It is often so taken by Greek authors' [Calvin 1963:293].

century CE, Calvin relied on the ancient writers such as Pliny, Strabo, Josephus and above all Jerome (Parker 1971:82) although Budé was also useful in this regard (Flaming 2006:134; Gamble 1985:10). Calvin also entered into critical dialogue with ancient philosophers when reading and interpreting Scripture (Steinmetz 2009:143).

## ■ The role of the socio-historical context of the biblical text in Reformed exegesis today

The socio-historical context has always been an integral part of the grammatical-historical method as practised in reformed exegesis (Janse van Rensburg et al. 2015:137–156; Van der Walt & Jordaan 2004:502) and indeed in biblical exegesis generally. Silva (2007) states that:

[E]very written document should be read ‘historically’; that is, we ought to take into account that it was written by a particular individual (or group of individuals) in a particular time in history and that it was motivated by some particular occasion. (p.176)

This is particularly true when interpreting a document that is as far removed in time and culture from today as the Bible. With reference to the interpretation of the NT, Conzelmann and Lindemann (1988) state that exegesis is facilitated by:

[T]he illumination of the NT history as a specific era in the Hellenistic-Roman and Jewish history, and the description of the social conditions in Palestine at the time of Jesus. (p. 1)

This is *mutatis mutandis* true of the OT (Broyles 2001:42–44). Apart from a general introduction to the writings of the Bible (i.e. information relating to authorship, recipients and literary unity of the text), a more detailed determination of the historical situation is required (Conzelmann & Lindemann 1988:5). This determination would encompass the political, social and cultural conditions of the text’s environment (Gorman 2009:70–74).

Indeed, a socio-historical interpretation of the biblical text has become more and more important for any interpretation to be valid (Vergeer & Janse van Rensburg 1994:1). In the absence of explicit descriptions of historic contexts in biblical writings, we are forced to ‘read between the lines’ in order to construct the historical context (Silva 2007:178). To this end, the exegete needs to construct the most scientifically verifiable socio-historical context of the author and first readers by augmenting the socio-historical data in the Bible with data from other relevant ancient sources (Breed, Janse van Rensburg & Jordaan 2008:50). The resultant construction then serves as a hypothesis to the interpretation (Vergeer & Janse van Rensburg 1994:2). According to Fitzgerald (2013:27), such socio-historical exegesis ‘helps us to establish what the text most likely meant for its author/editor and/or for its first readers.’ It leads us to the historical meaning of the text or at least to a range of plausible and probable meanings of the text in its historical context (cf. Fitzgerald 2013:18). Gorman (2009:71) warns, however, that this construction is frequently not exact or even approximate in its accuracy.

It thus becomes clear that the weight afforded to the socio-historical context in the process of interpretation can have a material bearing on the exegetical outcome. Two case studies from the current ecclesiastical debate illustrate this point. The question whether women may be ordained in ecclesiastical office has been debated within the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) since 1982 (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika 1982:501–502). In these debates, the socio-historical contexts of the relevant biblical texts<sup>5</sup> have featured prominently, being used to argue for and against the admission of women to the offices of minister of the Word, elder and deacon. During the General Synod of the RCSA in 2009 (cf. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika 2009:578–662), a comprehensive report on this question was tabled, and each section dealt with the exegesis of a particular biblical text contained the heading, ‘[f]irst readers of the Letter to the ... and their world’ (e.g. Breed et al. 2008:83 in the case of Eph 5:21–33). The extent of these socio-historical constructs ranged from the bare minimum (e.g. Breed et al. 2008:83) to a more elaborate description (e.g. Breed et al. 2008:98–99). However, the socio-historical context does not play a determining role in any part of the exegetical conclusions of the report. In a different study on Paul’s calls to silence directed at women,<sup>6</sup> Wessels (2014:51–61) provides a far more comprehensive socio-historical construct for the relevant texts. This construct then plays a far weightier role in his exegetical conclusions regarding the texts (Wessels 2014:89–90, 92–94). Opponents of Wessels’ reading of these texts will claim that his construct of their socio-historical contexts goes far beyond the scope allowed by the text itself and that his constructs determine the outcome of his exegesis. Conversely, proponents of a women-in-office reading of these texts will allege that the opponents of such a reading do not adequately account for the socio-historical contexts in their exegetical findings.

The second illustration is drawn from the debate about homosexuality, same-sex relationships and the Bible. Within this debate, the importance of the socio-historical contexts of the relevant biblical texts<sup>7</sup> cannot be overestimated (cf. Jonker 2006:401). Consequently, the weight afforded to it within the exegetical process stand front and centre. Exegetes interpreting these texts as not containing any prohibition on modern-day homosexuality and same-sex relationships read these texts in various constructs<sup>8</sup> of their socio-historical contexts (see Table 1).

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5. Romans 16:1–12; 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, 14:26–40; Galatians 3:26–29; Ephesians 5:21–33; 1 Timothy 2:8–15, 3:1–16, 5:3–16; 1 Peter 3:1–7 [cf. Breed et al. 2008].

6. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:11–15.

7. Genesis 9:20–27, 19:4–11; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:24–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10.

8. Table 1 does not purport to represent all socio-historical constructs proposed in literature.



**TABLE 1:** Socio-historical constructs according to pro-gay exegetes.

Text	Socio-historical constructs according to pro-gay exegetes
Genesis 9:20–27	Even if Ham used homosexual rape to humiliate his father, Noah, and to exert power over him, 'the passage does not address the issue of homosexual love between two free adults' (Gnuse 2015:69–70)
Genesis 19:4–11	The constructed socio-historical context does not reference homosexuality per se, but rather inhospitality, (attempted) rape and/or general wickedness (Anthonissen & Oberholzer 2001:135; Jonker 2006:404; cf. Dallas 2007:175–176; Gnuse 2015:73). It may also reference the men of Sodom's hubris in wanting to know and consequently to rise above the divine (Doyle 1998:99). Carden (1999:93) constructs a socio-historical context where the sin of the men of Sodom was '... the very system of patriarchy and patriarchy's requisite, compulsory heterosexuality.'
Leviticus 18:22, 20:13	The constructed socio-historical context refers to idolatrous homosexuality (Anthonissen & Oberholzer 2001:114, 130; cf. Dallas 2007:183; Gnuse 2015:77) and (gay) temple prostitution (Anthonissen & Oberholzer 2001:131–133; Jonker 2006:407). Lings (2009:249) constructs a context for Leviticus 18:22 that supports a prohibition on homosexual incest while Gnuse's (2015:76) construct refers to any form of sexuality that does not seek procreation. Walsh (2001:208) posits a construct that refers to '... the gender construction of maleness in a society where honour and shame are foundational social values.' Snyman (2006:975–978) refers to homosexual acts performed by heterosexual men in the context of the family clan and the pervasive culture of honour and shame among men.
Romans 1:24–27	The constructed socio-historical context refers to either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• heterosexuals practising homosexuality rather than true homosexuals (cf. Dallas 2007:203–204; cf. Hvalvik 2015:148–149)</li> <li>• homosexual persons given over to idolatry (Anthonissen &amp; Oberholzer 2001:137; cf. Dallas 2007:206; Gnuse 2015:81)</li> <li>• lustful and promiscuous sexual behaviour – including pederasty – rather than homosexual persons in committed and loving relationships (Anthonissen &amp; Oberholzer 2001:137; cf. Dallas 2007:207; cf. Gnuse 2015:80; Punt 2014:12–13). Balch (1998:439) constructs a socio-historical context based on sexual addiction.</li> </ul>
1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10	The constructed socio-historical context refers to prostitution or immoral behaviour in general (Anthonissen & Oberholzer 2001:137; cf. Dallas 2007:209–211) and not to homosexuals as a group or even homosexual acts (cf. Hvalvik 2015:151). Gnuse (2015:80) constructs a context of abusive sexual relationships and specifically pederasty.

**TABLE 2:** Socio-historical constructs according to anti-gay exegetes.

<b>Text</b>	<b>Socio-historical construct according to anti-gay exegetes</b>
Genesis 9:20–27	The constructed socio-historical context refers to an instance of incestuous, homosexual rape (Botha 2005:134; Gagnon 2001:64).
Genesis 19:4–11	Although the text does not deal directly with consensual homosexual relationships, the constructed socio-historical context refers to homosexual rape as the manifestation of inhospitality (Botha 2005:138–139; Gagnon 2001:76).
Leviticus 18:22, 20:13	Homosexual cult prostitution was part of the constructed socio-historical context of these texts but as the most acceptable form of homosexual intercourse and thus to ban this form was to ban all homosexual intercourse (Gagnon 2001:130–131).
Romans 1:24–27	The constructed socio-historical context refers to all persons who consciously suppress the revelation of God in nature, which suppression manifests in idolatry and homosexual acts (Botha 2005:176; Gagnon 2001:268). Whether the idolatry and homosexual acts are linked is irrelevant, as is the question whether these homosexual acts are performed irresponsibly or promiscuously (Dallas 2007:207).
1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10	The constructed socio-historical context, based on a semantic study of the terms used, refers to homosexual intercourse in general and to both the active and passive partner without any restriction, limitation or qualification (Botha 2005:163, 169; Gagnon 2001:330, 336, 338; Goldingay et al. 2011:27; Hvalvik 2015:155). There is no indication of trade, buying or selling of sex, which makes prostitution an improbable socio-historical context (Dallas 2007:211).

However, exegetes interpreting these texts as indeed containing strict prohibitions on modern-day homosexuality and same-sex relationships also read these texts in various constructs<sup>9</sup> of their socio-historical contexts (see Table 2).

At the extreme end the scale, we also find exegetes (and believers) who adhere to the hermeneutical principle of biblical literalism or ‘the belief that the Bible is the actual word of God and is thus to be taken literally, word for word’ (Perry 2015:793). Such an approach is equated with fundamentalism and biblicism (cf. Saaiman 2005:167; cf. Smith 2011:6) and is associated with the Reformed principle of *sola scriptura* (cf. Frame 1997:275; Smith 2011:4). One of the consequences of a fundamentalist or biblicist approach to Scripture is the dehumanising of the text and a denial of the human manner in which Scripture

9. Table 2 does not purport to represent all socio-historical constructs proposed in literature.

came into being (Saaiman 2005:175; Vorster 2004:596). Furthermore, such an approach leads to a monistic and ahistorical reading which does not sufficiently account for the cultural-historic context of the text (Frame 1997:272; Vorster 2004:597) or fails to do so at all. The result is a strictly literal reading of the text and a literal obedience to the text, even when the socio-historical context suggests otherwise. Snyman (2006:969) states that such an approach leads to complete misrepresentations of biblical values and truths.

Considering these wide-ranging constructed socio-historical contexts, it is no wonder that exegetes will arrive at polar-opposite conclusions regarding the interpretation of these texts. Moreover, opponents of a pro-gay reading of these texts will allege that the proponents of such a reading construct socio-historical contexts far beyond the scope allowed by the text itself and that the outcome of their exegesis cannot stand on its own since it is determined by their constructs. Conversely, opponents of an anti-gay reading of these texts will allege that the proponents of such a reading do not adequately account for the socio-historical contexts in their exegetical findings.

## ■ Weighing differing socio-historical constructs in exegesis: A balanced view

How do we, then, evaluate these constructs and their weight in the final interpretation of these texts? One could argue, as Silva (2007:179) does, that the more an interpretation of the text relies on such an inferred construct, the less persuasive it is. Also, the less plausible such a construct is, the less persuasive the interpretation based on it becomes. However, if the construction comes forth from the text itself and contributes to a better understanding of the text, it may add to the persuasive power of the subsequent exegetical findings (cf. Silva 2007:179). According to Silva, a good interpretation should not depend so heavily on an inferred construct that it cannot stand on its own. He says (Silva 2007):

A theory about the historical situation may help us to become sensitive to certain features of the text that we might otherwise ignore, but it is the text that must be ultimately determinative. (p. 179)

All the exegetes referred to above will most probably claim that their constructs and consequent interpretations pass this test. Fantin (2006:194) argues that the most important consideration in deciding on the relevance of a socio-historical context is the context of the text itself. If the socio-historical construct exceeds the boundaries of the text in its context, it is not relevant.

What would then be considered a balanced view on the role of socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis? From the foregoing, it is clear that the socio-historical context of the text is indispensable in coming to a proper understanding of the text and its message. To completely ignore the socio-historical context or not properly account for it in your understanding of the text does indeed amount to a literalist and/or fundamentalist reading of the text, which in turn

leads to a distortion of the message. However, the socio-historical context cannot in itself be determinative in understanding the text as it forms part of a number of aspects all of which are important in Reformed exegesis. These aspects include textual context, genre, canonical aspects, grammatical analysis, semantic analysis, revelation-historical placing and indeed socio-historical analysis (cf. Janse van Rensburg et al. 2015). None of these individual aspects in principle carry more weight than any other in determining the meaning of the text. A balanced view thus avoids ignoring or underplaying the socio-historical context of the text but also avoids using the socio-historical context as a hermeneutic key in understanding the text, especially when such a context is constructed outside of the scope of the text itself. An exegete following these guidelines will do justice to both the reformed principle of *sola scriptura* and its application by Reformers such as John Calvin.

## ■ Conclusion

This chapter attempted to shed light on the role and place of the socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis. By way of two examples from ecclesiastical debate, two extremes were juxtaposed, namely ignoring or not properly accounting for the socio-historical context in exegesis and overreliance on socio-historical constructs in exegesis. The former leads to literalist and fundamentalist readings of the text and the latter to exegetical findings in which the socio-historical construct becomes the hermeneutical key to understanding the text. Based on the reformed principle of *sola scriptura* and the gravity with which the reformer John Calvin considered the socio-historical context in his exegesis, this chapter argues for a balanced view on the role and place of the socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis, avoiding the pitfalls illustrated above. It proposes that exegetes be true to the principle that the socio-historical context is indispensable in a proper understanding of the text, but it is not determinative as far as such understanding is concerned.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 2

Socio-historical investigation and study of the biblical text has always been an integral part of Reformed exegesis as an approach to understanding the biblical message. In recent times, this aspect of exegesis has become more prominent in the light of new discoveries regarding the socio-historical context of the Bible and new methods employed to study such discoveries. In celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, this chapter investigates the role and place of the socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis. There seems to have been a shift in some Reformed circles, moving to either a neglect of the socio-historical context as an integral part of the exegetical process or an overreliance on the socio-historical constructs in the understanding of Scripture. This chapter argues for a balanced view on the role of the socio-historical context in Reformed exegesis, based on the principle that it is indispensable yet not determinative in understanding the text.

# Historical, text-immanent and sociological approaches to the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels

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## ■ Introduction

A text can be approached in a number of different ways. The discipline of linguistics differentiates between historical (diachronic) and text-immanent (synchronic) approaches (Barton 1999:14; Du Toit 2009b:122). When reading a text such as a Gospel, a reader can use the text to investigate the historical events it describes, to get insight into the Christian community that preserved the traditions incorporated in the text, to shed light on the

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situation or perspectives of the author or to investigate the manner in which the document originated. These investigations would all imply a diachronic reading of the text. However, a text can also be read synchronically, resulting in the reading of the literary text in its self-contained world, abstracted from its historical context (cf. Barton 1999:14; Foster 2004:17; Lategan 2009:84; Tuckett 1987:1). Scholars proposing a synchronic reading of the text often criticise diachronic readings as unlitrary in character (Barton 1999:14). At times, it seems that practitioners of the different approaches tend to over-exaggerate the applicability of their own approaches while negating the worth of other approaches. My argument in this chapter is that it is undesirable to drive such a wedge between historical and text-immanent approaches as they can be used to illuminate different aspects in the investigation of a text. My intention is therefore to provide a broad overview of the historical and text-immanent approaches and to demonstrate how these approaches could complement one another when read with a sociological perspective in mind. I illustrate my argument with reference to passages from the Synoptic Gospels. Though some Reformed scholars are dismissive of some of these approaches, I argue that insights from these approaches can indeed be beneficial.

The interpretation of a text involves many aspects, and this rather necessitates a multifaceted process. It could be detrimental to stick to only one method or to neglect the insights provided by a variety of approaches. Depending on the questions asked, various methods can complement and reinforce one another (Brueggemann 1997:58; Du Toit 2009a; Kennedy 2006:128; Perrin 1972:5–18). For this reason, I recommend a problem-oriented approach. In a problem-oriented approach, the challenges and issues presented by the text suggest which method should be used (Egger 1996:8). Although a set of methods is available, the researcher uses these methods according to the requirements of the text and the questions to be answered. Each perspective on a text has its limitations, but with a plurality of methods, the methods can strengthen each other to arrive at a richer and more integrated grasp of the meaning (Foster 2004:6; Nel 2014:270). The problem with such an approach, however, is that each approach requires some specialisation. In a problem-orientated approach, it is therefore impossible to engage with the specialised detail of each method. Only those facets in each methodological approach that are relevant to answering the research question are utilised.

Furthermore, different approaches in their specialised forms sometimes discount principles of other approaches. Historical approaches are often questioned in favour of text-immanent approaches, but one cannot completely abandon a historical approach to a biblical text (Barton 1999:18; Catchpole 1997:187) as these texts developed within historical contexts and were received and preserved in historical contexts. Historical investigations therefore do provide useful insights for the interpretation of the Christian Bible. The ideal is that insight from both approaches are made available for mutual correction and enrichment in a complementary manner. In a problem-orientated approach to a text, both historical and text-immanent perspectives are utilised to address certain problems that arise during the interpretation process.

A brief orientation regarding the variety of approaches is therefore appropriate. The intention is not to give a detailed description of the various approaches but to indicate which kinds of question require which kinds of method in the interpretation of biblical texts.

## ■ Historical approaches

Historical approaches are rooted in historical criticism. Historical criticism, as classically developed by German scholars, entails historical approaches to a text. Historical-critical exegetes are primarily interested in the process that resulted in the written document or, in other words, the genetic question (Barton 1999:9; Van Aarde 2009:381). It is sometimes argued that historical criticism undermines the biblical text as canonical Scripture (Ladd 1971:51–52; Westermann 1982:12). Depending on how historical criticism is applied, my assumption is that its methodologies do provide useful tools for the interpretation of the biblical text. The biblical text should still be approached with trust in its reliability (cf. Greidanus 1988:37). A historical-critical approach does not necessarily reject that God acted in history as testified to in the biblical text or that he acted in the origin of the text. It should allow for a transcendent God to be acknowledged as the God of history. It also does not necessarily replace the biblical text, recognised as canonical, with a reconstructed earlier text.

Historical criticism entails a variety of methods. It investigates the original sources that contained the words and deeds of Jesus (source criticism), the oral traditions preserving and developing these traditions (form criticism) and how the author reworked the material to present his perspectives (redaction criticism) (Catchpole 1997:168; Matera 1987:1). The assumption is that insight into the historical process of producing the document could offer answers as to cause and effect of what has been written. The basis of this approach is that the biblical texts are historical as they stem from a historical context. These texts are primarily referential, referring to entities beyond the texts themselves, and not purely 'literary'. In order to interpret these texts, one has to have some understanding of their historical contexts (Greidanus 1988:299; Tuckett 1987:186). Typical questions asked as part of historical criticism are: How did the document come into existence? Who wrote the document? To whom was it addressed? When and where was it written? What sources were used, and how were the sources adapted? (Barton 1999:15; Blomberg & Markley 2010:67).

## ■ Questions of introduction

Questions typically addressed in introductions to biblical texts are related to historical-critical methodology (cf. Brown 1997; Kümmel 1975; Tuckett 1987:41–67). In applying this approach to a biblical text such as one of the Gospels, one recognises that the text narrates historical events and stems from a particular time in history. It was written by an author who found himself within a historical situation, and it was addressed by the author

to an audience belonging to that history, narrating prior events (Foster 2004:9). To understand what the author is saying, the exegetes have to place themselves as responsibly as possible in the situation of the original audience. For this reason, the exegete has to endeavour to investigate the religious and social situation of the contents that are narrated but also the situation in which the text originated some time later (cf. Viljoen 2016:1–8).

When reading the narrative about Jesus in the Gospels, one therefore has to reckon with three successive life-settings: its setting in the historical ministry of Jesus (*Sitz im Leben Jesu*), its setting in the restricted selection of Jesus' sayings in the community in which the particular Gospel originated (*Sitz im Leben der alten Kirche*) and its setting in the written Gospel (*Sitz im Leben des Evangeliums*). The last setting is immediately accessible in the written Gospel while the other two settings have to be derived from the written text and are therefore only indirectly accessible through the written Gospel.

However, such an enterprise raises some methodological problems. As the text itself serves as the most important source for investigating these historical situations, one may ask how legitimate it is to use a text as evidence for its own situation. Can one use the text as evidence to reconstruct its situation and then use this reconstructed situation to interpret the text? Such a procedure implies circular reasoning, yet it is almost unavoidable. For this reason, it is beneficial to also use sources other than the one under consideration when constructing the background of the document. It becomes more complicated where evidence from outside of the text is scarce (with the result that only one side of the conversation is represented) or when outside information appears to be in conflict with the textual evidence. Nevertheless, the NT text is part of the religious world of the 1st century, which makes this text indispensable to illuminate its contexts. Obviously, such an investigation has limits, and it has to be done with the necessary discretion and caution. Nel (2014:268) aptly warns that, while the circumstances of a text are important in the hermeneutical process, these circumstances should never be taken as the point of departure. The process of interpretation starts with the text and not with the circumstances of the author or the readers. Another issue one has to keep in mind is that the socio-historical context of the NT text is not a uniform and unchanging entity. One may ask how widespread the issues were with which the authors were confronted, how uniform and large the communities were that they addressed and what kinds of diversity existed within the broader religious society. When using Jewish sources to describe the Jewish thought world in NT times, one has to keep in mind that many of the Jewish sources were derived from later times. It therefore remains a question whether the same issues were entertained in the time of Jesus and when the Gospels were written. Mechanical and positivistic answers to the questions of introduction should therefore be avoided. One should acknowledge that the answers to historical questions remain constructions that need constant revision and reformulation (Braaten 1968:100).



## Source criticism

Source criticism is also an indispensable part of an investigation of the Gospels. This is particularly relevant because of the obvious and undeniable relationship between the different Synoptic Gospels. With regard to this literary relation, the two-source hypothesis is usually taken as point of departure. It is assumed that Mark was written first and was used by Matthew and Luke. Furthermore, it is assumed that Matthew and Luke each had access to another source, the hypothetical Q. In addition to this, Matthew and Luke presumably each made use of their own special traditions as well, often referred to by the symbols 'M' for Matthean material and 'L' for Lukan material (De Silva 2004:166).<sup>10</sup> Matthew expanded considerably on Mark's text, especially adding teaching material. Matthew also tended to shorten Mark's versions of parallel narratives. For example, when investigating individual narratives in Matthew, an exegete should consider omissions, additions or alterations by Matthew to Mark's text, and compare them with Lukan parallels.

The parallel texts of Matthew 9:9–12 with Mark 2:13–17 and Luke 5:27–32 on the short narrative of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners serves as example. Matthew follows Mark fairly closely. As in Mark, Jesus calls a tax collector to become his disciple, and the tax collector follows instantaneously (Mt 9:9), followed by Jesus' table fellowship with outcasts (Mt 9:10), the Pharisees' objection (Mt 9:11) and Jesus' response (Mt 9:12–13). The difference is that Matthew, like Luke, drops the reference to the large crowd that followed him and whom he taught. Furthermore, Matthew uses the name 'Matthew' instead of 'Levi son of Alphaeus' and significantly adds the pronouncement in Matthew 9:13 while quoting from Hosea 6:6. This comparison reveals some of Matthew's special interests that may be relevant to specific research questions. While it seems that Matthew for some reason finds it unnecessary to refer to the crowds that followed Jesus, he does find it necessary to identify Levi the tax collector with Matthew, who is also called a tax collector in Matthew 10:3 (in contrast to Mark and Luke) (Davies & Allison 2004b:98). The addition of the reference to Hosea 6:6 in the Matthean version is striking. This citation in Matthew is not only unique among the parallel synoptic narratives but is uttered twice in Matthean material (also in Mt 12:7). This reference is even absent from the entirety of the rest of the NT. It suggests that this quotation is of particular importance to the First Evangelist. Such accents in Matthew obviously requires the attention of an exegete.

When studying a specific Gospel, one sometimes also comes across elements in the text that appear to be uncharacteristic of that specific author. This might signify the use of sources or traditions of some kind. Scholars are sometimes tempted to split passages up into different sources and traditions. Matthew 5:18–19 serves as an example. Meier (1976:165) remarks, '[i]n many ways, 5:19 is the most difficult verse to explain within the

10. These latter components make the label 'two-source hypothesis' something of a misnomer.

present Matthean context. It seems like an undigested morsel next to the carefully redacted 5:18.’ Meier (1976) further suggests the following:

5:18–19 in the tradition may show successive stages of Jewish–Christian attitudes on the Law. Vs. 5:18bc may reflect the severe view of stringent Jewish Christians, while 5:19 may be the corrective of more moderate Jewish Christians. This attempt at moderation has produced a curious piece ..., a kind of literary fossil now embedded in 5:19. (p. 165)

My assumption, however, is that one should rather interpret the text as it stands. When an author uses sources, this presumably implies that he agrees with the sources. Therefore, an exegete should not drive a wedge between the sources and the author.

During the 19th century, scholars mainly used source criticism to determine which traditions were the earliest in order to discover the closest historical description of the life of Jesus. From a Reformed perspective, such an approach is not preferable as the status of the final text of the Gospels then comes into question. Source criticism, however, is useful in terms of the contribution it makes towards redaction criticism and to illuminate the authors’ special interests as they address issues in their situations (cf. Catchpole 1997:169; Tuckett 1987:89).

## Form criticism

The assumption of form criticism, which emerged shortly after the First World War, is that there is a correlation between the way in which a tradition is told and the situation (*Sitz im Leben*) in which it is used (Catchpole 1997:169; Tuckett 1987:95). Form criticism has attracted some opposition, probably due to Bultmann’s sceptical views about the historicity of parts of the tradition (cf. Bultmann 1963). However, such scepticism is not inherent in the method itself.

The correlation between form and situation can be explained by referring to the controversial stories in Matthew concerning disputes between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. These stories somehow reflect conflicts that the early church, in which this Gospel originated, experienced. The question by the expert of the Law about the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:34–40 serves as a telling example. Matthew turns the didactic narrative (*Schulgespräch*) of Mark 12:28–34<sup>11</sup> on the greatest commandment, which has an amiable tone, into a conflict narrative (*Streitgespräch*),<sup>12</sup> which has a controversial tone (Bornkamm 1954:85–93). Matthew’s story forms a continuation of two previous conflict narratives, namely the narrative on the payment of taxes (Mt 22:15–22) and the narrative

11. Though Mark 12:28–34 is usually described as a *Schulgespräch*, an irenic dialogue does not really fit into the series of preceding conflict stories and Jesus’ attack on the scribes that follows. Meier [2009:499] is of the opinion that Mark 12:28–34 probably originally circulated as an independent oral tradition.

12. Notably, Luke 10:25 also presents the story as a *Streitgespräch*: ἑκτεράζων αὐτόν [testing him].

about the resurrection (Mt 22:23–33; Repschinski 2000:262). A central element of a *Streitgespräch* is the interaction of challenge and riposte (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:42; Repschinski 2000:262–272). It consists of a challenge with the intention to undermine another person’s reputation and a response that measures up to the challenge.

From this comparison between the Gospels, the different forms of the narratives can be recognised. This difference in form reflects the different situations in which the different Gospels originated.

However, a form-critical approach is not without problems. There is no neat one-to-one correspondence between a form and a specific situation in the early church. The exegete should keep in mind that the form of a tradition does not necessarily provide a description of a particular community but rather a typical situation within a community. Furthermore, there is often very little or no evidence for the alleged situation in the church apart from the Gospel itself. The text then implies a proposed situation, and the proposed situation provides the context within which the text should be interpreted. As pointed out earlier, such an argument is circular and asks for fine discernment in the interpreting process.

## Redaction criticism

Form critics tend to have a rather dismissive view of the activity of the evangelists themselves. The authors are mainly regarded as collectors who assembled individual traditions into a document.<sup>13</sup> This changed with the development of modern redaction criticism from the mid-20th century onwards (Catchpole 1997:169; Tuckett 1987:117). Redaction criticism regards authors as more creative. According to this view, the way in which the authors adapted the traditions reveals something about their theological intentions (Foster 2004:7). As far back as the 19th century, F.C. Baur (1847) recognised that all the Gospels were governed by individual *Tendenzen*. Lightfoot (1935) continues with this idea by demonstrating how Mark creatively shaped tradition in his Gospel. Nevertheless, modern redaction criticism gained momentum with Marxsen’s study on Mark (cf. Marxsen 1969), Bornkamm’s on Matthew (cf. Bornkamm 1963) and Conzelmann’s on Luke (cf. Conzelmann 1960).<sup>14</sup>

Matthew 9:9–12 is once again used as example to illustrate this point. The fact that Matthew, different from Mark and Luke, identifies himself as the tax collector and adds a

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13. It is often assumed that form and source critics merely regarded the evangelists as cut-and-paste theologians or people who threaded beads of tradition onto a string. Such assumption, however, is a serious oversimplification. The focus of the form and source critics were on the material that the evangelists incorporated into their Gospels (cf. Foster 2004:7).

14. The German versions by these books by Marxsen, Bornkamm and Conzelmann were published in the mid-1950s.

pronouncement of Jesus as referring to Hosea 6:6 reveals some of the special interests of the evangelist. Such interests obviously require the attention of an exegete.

Once again, this approach is not without its limitations. On the one hand, we do not have access to all the sources a specific author used. On the other hand, in cases where we do have parallels between the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew or Luke might not have changed Mark because they were content with the way Mark had formulated the content (cf. Foster 2004:8). If a redaction critic looks only at the changes an author made to his sources, he or she will miss such instances, which would lead to a distorted picture of the evangelist's concerns. Furthermore, one should consider the redactional activities on smaller passages within the work of the evangelist as a whole. The evangelist produced the whole text, and the whole text should be taken into account to discover something of the author's concerns and ideas. Porter (1995) expresses this as follows:

Redaction criticism ... is often thought to have failed to see the whole text, concentrating more on the seams or changes in the text rather on what the text retains from its source. (p. 82)

## ■ Text-immanent approaches

Proponents of the text-immanent (synchronic) approach, in contrast, argue that texts should not be used as windows onto their prehistory but that they should be read as 'self-contained worlds', regardless of the original authorial intent of the text (cf. Du Toit 2009b:122; Foster 2004:15). The benefit of this approach is that it endeavours to interpret the text that lies before us. Coupled with this is an appreciation of how a text works to communicate meaning and how it challenges and transforms the values and convictions of the recipients of the text. However, as argued before, a text cannot be interpreted ahistorically as if contained in a text-immanent capsule (Foster 2004:16; Lategan 2009:48). The text has an origin and an address. It is part of history and has referential points beyond itself. Certain historical questions still have to be asked as far as they serve to illuminate the text at hand.

In a synchronic approach, emphasis is put on the text as a structural entity (Lategan 2009:45). Different components of a text are virtually in dialogue with one another and can therefore not be read in isolation (Weren 1994:15). The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)<sup>15</sup> did pioneering work in this regard. He viewed language as a synchronic system functioning according to a finite set of rules.<sup>16</sup> Later this developed

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15. De Saussure's pioneering work, *Cours de linguistique générale*, was published posthumously in 1916.

16. De Saussure illustrates the synchronic structure of a text with the game of chess. Chess pieces are bound to a system. They have a conventional set of moves on a conventional board of 64 squares. The 'value' of each piece is determined by rules applicable to that piece and its position on the board in relationship to other pieces on the board (cf. Lategan 2009:45). Witherington (2013:52) has remarked, '[a] text without a context is just a pretext for whatever you want it to mean.'

into the text-immanent approach and literary criticism (Lategan 2009:46). These approaches focus on the structure of the language and exclude the history of a text. An important benefit of these approaches is that close attention is paid to the text and the way it was constructed. Meaning is constituted in the first place by the language itself. The text-immanent reading of texts leads to a variety of specialised structural approaches (cf. Du Toit 2009c:217–265; Foster 2004:15), for instance discourse analysis, with people like Louw (1982) and Nida (1983) as important proponents, narrative analysis with Greimas (1970)<sup>17</sup> and Genette (1980)<sup>18</sup> as leading figures (cf. Van Aarde 2009:381–418) and rhetorical analysis<sup>19</sup> (Kennedy 1966; Vorster 2009:505–578).

Literary criticism encompasses a broad range of interests (Hayes & Holladay 2007:91), namely literary structure (i.e. how a text is arranged or organised), literary style (i.e. techniques of language use that distinguish an author or a text), literary purpose (i.e. what a writing achieves either as an expression of the author's intent or as a function of the text itself), literary mood (i.e. emotions associated with or created by a writing), literary strategy (i.e. how various elements are developed within a single genre to achieve a certain purpose) and literary imagination (i.e. the world reflected in a text [*or the author's mind*] and the world a text creates in the reader's mind). Each of these approaches is specialised and encompasses considerable academic jargon and techniques. In a problem-orientated approach, it is not possible to engage with all these intricacies.

With a text-immanent approach, an exegete reads the text as the literary product at hand. Such a text-immanent approach is useful to interpret components of the text in relationship to one another. The text is approached as a network of interconnected components that together form causal relations within a semantic *universum* (cf. Weren 1994:8–10). Individual words, phrases and scenes are engaged with one another, and

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17. Greimas identified actants in narrative texts who fulfil actantial roles, for example the protagonist as the principle character or subject (like Jesus in the Gospels), the object(s) as the persons at whom the acts and values of the protagonist are directed (like the disciples, crowds or marginalised figures in the Gospels), the antagonists as those who oppose the efforts of the protagonist (like the Pharisees and scribes) and the helpers who assists the protagonist (like the disciples in some cases) (Van Aarde 2009:405).

18. Genette [1980] introduced the important difference between 'plot' and 'story' in *Discours du récit*. The 'story' (*histoire*) refers to the chronological sequence of events and 'plot' to the way these events are presented in the narrative. When the events selected from the lives of people of certain times and places are combined into a series, a plot develops and the story becomes a narrative discourse [*récit*]. The narrative discourse [*récit*] is directly available to the reader while the story [*histoire*] should be abstracted from the narrative discourse (Van Aarde 2009:384–385).

19. Rhetorical analysis investigates the art of persuasive speech and the persuasive power of a text. The aim is to get a better understanding of what the author wanted to achieve and what proper responses could be expected of the readers by analysing the rhetorical structure of the text and strategies employed by the author.

their meanings are dependent on their interplay. On closer examination, it seems that the Gospels form well-structured units characterised by unique narratological arrangements. Different parts of the narrative are arranged in such a manner that the plot develops into dramatic climaxes. The implied author acts as the narrator who guides the reader through the narrated world. His voice is constantly heard as he incorporates his commentary into the narrative. He determines what is told and how it is told.

However, one should not read the text as if in a self-contained autonomous world as the text originally plays off in a historical setting.

## ■ Sociological approaches

Sociological methods to interpreting the biblical text bring a useful interaction between diachronic and synchronic approaches to the text (cf. Foster 2004:10; Tuckett 1987:136). Sociological studies explore the social needs, social conflicts, group interests, pressures and clashing ideologies as revealed in texts (Meeks 1983:2; Theissen 1983). This includes social descriptions and sociological explanations of the various aspects of the life depicted in the biblical texts (Elliot 1995; Tuckett 1987:139). Sociological studies consider the text both as a reflection of and a response to the social and cultural settings in which it was produced. Elliot (1995:8) emphasises that the text and context is more closely intertwined than had been previously recognised.

The result is that scholars who follow sociological approaches have focused a great deal on discerning the situation behind various writings (e.g. Love 2009; Malina 2009:154–193). It is assumed that whoever produces or listens to a text carries certain assumptions and expectations from their background into it. Sociological approaches reject radical ahistorical approaches that neglect the significant relationship to the world in which a text has been produced and read. Radical ahistorical approaches therefore limit and can even skew the comprehension of a text. Stanton (1992:380) remarks that, if the horizons and expectations of the first readers of a text are ignored, ‘interpretation would be like a picnic – a picnic to which ... we all bring our meanings.’

The applicability of sociological perspectives can again be illustrated by referring to the challenge set to Jesus by the expert of the law in Matthew 22:34–40. A sociological perspective draws our attention to the role of honour and shame in this short narrative on the greatest commandment. Honour and shame were pivotal values in ancient Mediterranean societies (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:76; Witherington 2013:47). A person acquired honour based on his or her conduct but also based on other people’s recognition of the honourable behaviour. In this culture, one would do anything to achieve honour and to avoid shame.<sup>20</sup>

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20. In the ancient Mediterranean culture, the most important value was the honour of one’s name and one’s family name. Life and truth were regarded further down the hierarchy of values [Witherington 2013:47].

In the *Streitgespräch* of Matthew 22:23–40, the intention of the expert of the law and of the Pharisees is to shame Jesus. However, Jesus acquires honour by his skilful riposte to this challenge. The Pharisees witness Jesus' victory in this *Streitgespräch*. Yet, instead of recognising Jesus' honour, their jealousy apparently increases.

Another example of the role of honour and shame can be seen in Matthew 6:1. In this verse, the Matthean Jesus warns against the pitfalls of practicing insincere righteousness (Strack & Billerbeck 1965:386). Jesus contrasts the outward religious performances of the hypocrites to impress people with that of the disciples who aim to please their father in heaven. Members of the Matthean community are encouraged to perform their acts of piety without pretence and in private where only God can see, not like the hypocrites who parade their pious acts in public to gain praise (Betz 1995:351; Davies & Allison 2004a:579; Sim 1999:122). In an honour-and-shame society, one's good reputation is sustained by the esteem of others who benefit from one's public actions (Carter 2000:158; Malina & Rohrbauch 2003:370; Witherington 2013:49). In Matthew 6:1, Jesus, therefore, opposes a fundamental societal pattern.

However, the goal of discerning the situation behind a text is not without problems. While text and society are undoubtedly related, the correlation is not precise. There is a risk of referential fallacy. When reconstructing the social and religious setting of the text, one should keep in mind that this is based on the author's depiction of the world outside the text from his or her perspective and not with the real world as such. The text at hand introduces an implied author, an implied setting and an implied audience. The reconstruction of the intended audience is therefore difficult. The document could have been intended to promote core values of the audience that already existed, but it could also have been intended to change their values (cf. Foster 2004:12).

Sociological approaches therefore investigate the implied community to better understand what the implied author of a text intended and how the implied readers would have appropriated the meaning.

## ■ Conclusion

### ■ Complementary use of methods

Looking at the three approaches of interpreting a text, namely the historical (diachronic), text-immanent (synchronic) and sociological (which provides a useful interaction between diachronic and synchronic approaches), it becomes apparent that each of these methods has its strengths and weaknesses. Such a multifaceted approach underscores Weren's (2014) remark:

Meaning is the result of the interplay between a textual unit and such factors as language, literary context, and cultural setting. Within this interplay, a text usually acquires a multi-layered meaning while the text is still a unit. (p. 4)

Meaning is therefore constituted by structure, discourse and intertextuality as well as by a socio-historical environment. Such an approach has the following intention (Weren 2014):

[To] narrow the gap between the world within and the world outside the text by not merely concentrating on relations between texts but also on the texts' correlations with their socio-cultural contexts. (p. 298)

My suggestion is that these methods should be used in such a manner that they complement each other. Obviously, such an approach raises concerns of their own, for example how to discern between competing elements in each approach. Discernment is therefore required from the exegete, who has to make use of insights gained from each approach without entering into competing technicalities of a variety of methods. When using insights from diachronic methods to gain insight into the meaning of the text within its original historical setting, the exegete should also consider insights from the synchronic methods to concentrate on the message of the text at hand, taking into consideration the interrelatedness of the different components of the text that determines the meaning of these components. This has to be done with insight gained from the sociological approaches regarding the importance of the social setting of text in determining the meaning of this ancient text.


These approaches provide useful tools for the interpretation of the biblical texts and should not be neglected in reformational methodology.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 3

This chapter investigates the differentiation between historical and text-immanent approaches to the interpretation of biblical texts with special reference to the Synoptic Gospels. Scholars proposing either one of these approaches often exaggerate the applicability of their own approaches while discounting the worth of others. My argument is that the questions to be answered should rather determine the approaches to be utilised. A problem-oriented approach should therefore be considered. I demonstrate how sociological methods of interpretation can provide a useful interface between historical and text-immanent approaches to the text. The arguments are demonstrated with reference to a number of passages from the Synoptic Gospels.



# A story about the book of Daniel<sup>21</sup>

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## Introduction

Rooted in the Renaissance, the Reformation opened the possibility for studying the biblical text in a context where the authority that the church exercises over the meaning of the Bible is less influential. This chapter contributes to the scholarly debate on the redaction history of the book of Daniel. The Reformation made possible such enquiries that seek to form the foundation of an ongoing rethinking of the theological meaning of the book in ever-changing contexts.

The main issue that will be argued in this chapter is that the book of Daniel in the MT originated during the first part of the 2nd century BCE in order to provide an

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obvious link between earlier religious traditions and newer (possibly more popular) religious views. This development took place against the backdrop of persecution of the Jewish population in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV. In the scholarly community, some of these newer religious views are aptly labelled 'apocalyptic literature'. This premise is not altogether novel and similar suggestions have been made by, among others, Boccaccini (2002) and Venter (2002). However, the present contribution adds to these insights by reconsidering the development of the book of Daniel and suggests a skilful arrangement of material in order to accommodate different and novel views, placed next to earlier and more traditional textual forms. In the process, issues related to different genres and languages attested to in the book of Daniel will also be addressed.

The first section of this chapter investigates the role played by (religious) texts in diverse (ancient) societies. Secondly, consideration is given to a few suggestions made in the past regarding the link between the book of Daniel and older written religious traditions. Then a proposal related to the redaction history of the book is restated, and lastly in a concluding section, it is shown how these issues are connected to the main argument referred to above, namely creating an accommodating text amid turbulent times in the Jewish history.

## ■ Religious texts in ancient communities

John Collins (1998:1) was surely correct when, in the late 1990s, he summarised one section of the scholarly community's attitude towards apocalyptic literature with a reference to the title of Klaus Koch's major contribution to this field, *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* (1970).<sup>22</sup> The explosion of scholarly work related to this field over the past years, superbly surveyed by DiTommaso (2007a; 2007b), bears testimony to efforts at resolving Koch's complaint about the lack of scholarly attention paid to apocalyptic literature during a preceding era. It also bears testimony to new questions being posed and new answers being sought by research in this genre. What is proposed here is that, in essence, this *Ratlosigkeit* stretches back to the compilation of the book of Daniel where, in Chapters 7–12, apocalyptic literature finds its only explicit manifestation in the OT.<sup>23</sup> The question to be addressed is why this type of

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22. The English translation of this work (Koch 1972) renders the title more positively as '*Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*'.

23. It is almost universally accepted that only the book of Daniel in the OT serves as an example of apocalyptic literature in this collection (see Collins 1998:3; Himmelfarb 2010:2). Although using the term 'Isaiah Apocalypse' with reference to Isaiah 24–27, Polaski [2001:51] concedes that these chapters do not represent a true specimen of the apocalyptic genre.

literature was created and subsequently incorporated as part of a larger anthology of religious texts?

If the classic theory related to the formation of the OT is adopted, the book of Daniel can be slotted into either the second or the third ‘stage’ of this development. Van der Kooij (2003) summarises this theory as follows:<sup>24</sup>

The idea is that the three parts of the Hebrew Bible, Law, Prophets, and Writings, were canonized in three successive stages in history: the Law in the fourth century BCE (Ezra), the Prophets a little before 200 BCE, and, finally, the Writings as additional part of the collection about 100 CE at the synod of Jamnia. (p. 27)

McDonald (2007:5) states that there are even voices promoting the idea that the early church ‘received from Jesus a closed biblical canon.’ Both these scholars go on to note that these traditional views have become obsolete in academic circles due to new discoveries<sup>25</sup> and subsequent new theories (McDonald 2007:11; Van der Kooij 2003:27). One of these new theories, proposed by Noll (2001), is noted below with the aim to elaborate on it and apply the insights proposed by him, not only to the formation of a larger anthology but, in fact, to the creation of individual ‘books’ in the anthology, here specifically the book of Daniel.

In his contribution, Noll (2001:1–24) notes that the creation of an anthology of texts per se does not necessarily have much to do with religion in the first place.<sup>26</sup> In his summary of the process of canonisation, he focuses on the role that texts played as part of a ‘conversation’ restricted to an elite literate class in ancient societies. According to him, the gathering of these texts did not serve a specific theological agenda but was rather a literary exercise. That is why we find dissimilarities in these texts, for instance in their treatment of the nature of the divine persona. Since the compilers of the texts did not have a theological agenda, they were not concerned about these discrepancies and did not attempt any harmonisation.

As to the aim of the compilers, Noll (2001:20–21) believes that they were creating a tale of origin, a genre that serves a socio-ideological purpose, namely to define ethnicity in response to a ‘crisis of identity engendered by sweeping cultural changes.’ Therefore, a special feature of this anthology (or library) of texts is its ‘eclectic inclusiveness’ – where

24. See also Noll [2001:3–4] for a similar view.

25. The obvious case in point being the manuscripts found at Qumran [Noll 2001:4; see VanderKam 2002 for a detailed argument].

26. See Davies [2002:36–52] for a similar view and a good overview of the formation and function of literature in ancient societies, particularly Ancient Israel. He describes how the national culture, over a period of time, developed into a religious phenomenon. Davies differs from Noll, though, in that he sees a closer connection between Jewish culture and their religion than is the case with other ancient societies [e.g. the Greeks].

a place for different and even opposing views is found (Noll 2001:21). A South African scholar sharing these sentiments is the late Ferdinand Deist, who notes that canon formation is not necessary a religious enterprise. Deist (1995:70) summarises this process as follows, '[t]he creation of canons thus seems to be the work of upper class leaders acting on behalf of, or for a society threatening to fall apart.'

This issue is discussed at much greater length in the works cited, but for the purpose of this chapter, I limit these discussions to the following observation: It seems that at least one of the functions of collecting (religious) texts in ancient societies is a sociological one, namely binding together a community – especially during times when the community's existence is threatened. A part of the nature of anthologies of religious texts was that of reflecting the (sometimes diverse) beliefs of a community. Hence, the next section takes a closer look at the social background of the community who was possibly responsible for the book of Daniel.

## ■ A sociological story of the book of Daniel

As is the case with many issues related to the book of Daniel, there is little agreement among scholars as to the specific social location of the compilers of this work. This may be merely reflecting the consequence of Noll's view related to the reason for such a compilation in the first place. The ideal of consistency was not striven after; hence more than one social location can be identified as being behind the present form of the text. Albertz (2001:171–173) gives the following helpful overview of what has been proposed in this regard.

Albertz (2001:171–172) traces the classic theory related to the social strand responsible for apocalyptic literature back to Plöger's rather simplistic two-group suggestion involving 'theocrats' on the one hand and 'eschatologists' on the other hand. The group responsible for the book of Daniel, often equated to the *Hasidim*, is associated with the latter group of 'pious conventicles' (eschatologists) joining forces with 'the lower classes'. Exactly the opposite is argued by, among others, Kratz and Steck, who situate those responsible for the book among the 'cultic and wisdom circles of Jerusalem' and hence part of an upper class representing a theocratic position. Yet another possibility is suggested by Collins who thinks of a group educated in the Eastern mantic tradition but not affiliated with the Jerusalem establishment.

In his attempt to clear up this disparate situation, Albertz (2001:174–174) criticises the differentiation between Daniel 1–6 and Daniel 7–12 based on genre considerations between non-apocalyptic stories (Dn 1–6) and apocalyptic visions (Dn 7–12). The book, as preserved in the MT, leads Albertz (2001) to conclude that, in fact, two apocalyptic books existed, namely one composed in Aramaic and the other in Hebrew. The latter 're-edited and interpreted the former during the Maccabean crisis' (Albertz 2001:179). Albertz is at pains to illustrate the apocalyptic qualities in Aramaic Daniel 2–7, but he fails to recognise

that these could in fact be the result of the suggested editing process during the 2nd century. The social setting he proposes for the book, in its combined final form, still has the *Hasidim* as major source,<sup>27</sup> but he sees the group as learned scribes who split into two factions – one militant and one quietist. The latter share the outlook that we find in the book of Daniel. However, sociologically Albertz (2001:201) remains vague and positions this group ‘somewhere between the aristocratic/priestly establishment and the lower-classes.’ For my study, this locality in a middle stratum is important.

Redditt (1998) suggests a different social location that sees this group as Jews in service of Antiochus III. They experienced the ‘good life’ under the Seleucid regime (as attested in the older court stories in the book of Daniel), but their life became a ‘nightmare’ under the reign of Antiochus IV. Redditt (1998:474) opines ‘[i]n the midst of persecution, the wise could look ahead to the fall of Antiochus IV and of all foreign domination.’ It is unclear, however, why they opted for ‘a life in God’s kingdom’ if they had it ‘good’ under the Seleucids prior to Antiochus IV. Furthermore, Redditt admits that ‘[i]hey did not lay out ... a program for future governance.’ Thus, it is difficult to imagine a group hoping for a kingdom where their future ‘good life’ is not spelled out in any detail instead of opting (and hoping) for the replacement of one (ominous) earthly emperor by a more amicable one.

Grabbe (2001) raises the possibility of a single author for the book of Daniel. He thinks of a ‘member of the aristocracy, perhaps a priest, and probably a prominent member of the community in Jerusalem’ (Grabbe 2001:243) as the writer and compiler of the book in its final form. This person wrote Daniel 7–12 during the period between the suppression of the daily sacrifice and the rededication of the temple (Grabbe 2001:243). These visions were added to extant tales, either as a ‘block of material’ or as a ‘set of separate tales’ ‘put together’ by the author (Grabbe 2001:243). Important for the present study is the fact that Grabbe views the production of the book as possibly by a single hand (using extant materials) during the 2nd century BCE.

In his discussion of the sociological environment that may have led to the writing of the book of Daniel, Davies (2001:250) notes that the issue of genre ‘... does not hold any key to a social description of its producers.’ Taking his cue from the text, Davies also identifies the *maskilim* as the object of research in order to solve this problem. He (Davies 2001:255) thinks that they formed part of a cluster of groups opposed to Antiochus IV and exhibited ‘ambivalent attitudes’ towards living under foreign rule. After discussing Qumran literature at greater length, Davies (2001) very cautiously concludes:

That these *maskilim* betray some diaspora roots, and see themselves as disenfranchised, erstwhile elite makes them plausible candidates for membership of sectarian movements opposed to the Hasmonians. (p. 264)

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27. This is a conclusion that Beyerlin (2001:211) refers to as ‘misleading’. Instead, he suggests the *maskilim* [wise] (as mentioned in Dn 1:4; 11:33; 12:3, 10) as a probable sociological circle for the origin of the book.

If this holds true, then the fact that their literary endeavours were taken up in the Hebrew Scriptures would present another example of literature that reflects what Noll terms ‘eclectic inclusiveness’ that represents a group in society that was not necessarily in power but still reflected a notable part of that society.

This section indicates that locating the book of Daniel in its final form, in a specific sociological context, is challenging. It is mostly due to the distinct types of literature that the book exhibits. Although there are those, like Davies, who wish to separate the issue of genre and social location, others have tried to illustrate the distinct contexts producing the court tales (Dn 1–6) and the visions (Dn 7–12).<sup>28</sup> In this chapter, my thoughts tend to align with the mediating suggestion of Grabbe (2001:231) who situates the author in the 2nd century BCE but also sees him using earlier material ‘probably from Ptolemaic time’ that he finds ‘sympathetic to his concerns’. For the purposes of proving the thesis of this chapter, namely that the book of Daniel exhibits various features to accommodate different views in the 2nd-century BCE Jewish society, one has to consider the relationship between the book and literary types that were known in that society.

## ■ A literary story of the book of Daniel

A slightly different trajectory can be followed when one wishes to treat the book of Daniel as a continuation of existing literary ideas. Barton (1996:37) points to the fact that biblical interpretation often gets caught up in a circularity whereby scholars first try to agree on what a text is and within these confines spend a lot of time to disagree on what the text means. From the discussion above, it is clear that, with regard to the book of Daniel, scholars are struggling to agree on the first issue, namely what the text is. Should it be seen as part of the prophetic, wisdom, or apocalyptic tradition?

## ■ Daniel and the prophets

Most scholars suggest a definite connection between apocalyptic and prophetic literature. If, for a moment, one considers Grabbe’s (2003a) playful definition of these two terms, one will surely conclude that these should be quite distinct genres. He (Grabbe 2003a) notes how scholars often see the writer of apocalyptic literature vis-à-vis a ‘true’ prophet as a ‘shadowing figure’ and how they have the following view of such a writer:

[A] sneaky little rascal who sits in his study, imagining all sorts of surreal images that would put Monty Python to shame and writing them down in the name of some ancient patriarch. (p. 116)

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28. See Collins (1993:47–50, 61–71) for a detailed discussion of the separate settings of these genres.

In contrast, scholars could also agree that a prophet could be ‘a four-eyed, one-horned pink and purple people eater who wears an itsy-bitsy teeny-weeny yellow polka-dot bikini’ (Grabbe 2003:193).

To be sure, one should note the contexts in which Grabbe proposes these absurdities. The first, related to the writer of apocalyptic, is situated in a context where Grabbe wishes to illustrate that, in fact, scholars know very little about the actual authors of prophetic books. The second quote is set in the context of highlighting the problematic nature of the definitions that scholars use. These abstractions may or may not reflect a real world outside the confines of their studies, offices and classrooms. What Grabbe draws attention to in his typical style is that things might not always be simply what we perceive them to be. In this context, he puts forward the suggestion that the ‘sharp dichotomy between prophecy and apocalyptic’ (Grabbe 2003b:194) be done away with and that scholars ‘rather see apocalyptic as a sub-genre of prophecy’ (Grabbe 2003b:195–196).

This proposal largely reflects the status quo in OT study before people like Hanson began to further investigate this state of affairs.<sup>29</sup> This was a period that saw a chronological link between prophecy and apocalyptic. With the decline of the former and the setting in of desperate socio-historical circumstances, people became attracted to teachings of apocalyptic groups. These teachings tried to explain the prevailing circumstances by means of, among others, a dualistic view of history in which what happens on earth is a reflection of a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil.

In an article that dates a decade and a half after *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik*, Koch (1985) asks whether Daniel is also among the prophets. He answers that, at a certain stage in the tradition, Daniel did form part of the second section of the Hebrew Bible or prophetic (*nəbi'im*) corpus. Koch (1985:121–123) bases his answer on evidence from the NT (Mt 24:15), the order of the books in the Septuagint, the evidence of Josephus (*Contra Apion* I, 38–41), Qumran material (4Q Flor. II:3) and the Jewish tradition itself (Moshe ben Asher and a Hebrew-Aramaic-Greek canon list). This leads to the following conclusion (Koch 1985):

[T]here is not a single witness for the exclusion of Daniel from the prophetic corpus in the first half of the first millennium A.D. In all the sources of the first century A.D. ... Daniel is reckoned among the prophets. (p. 123)

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 29. Hanson does not sever the link between apocalyptic and prophecy. In fact, he suggests such a link (see Bauckham 2010:43–44), but the distinction he makes sets the tone for serious scholarly engagement with apocalyptic literature in its own right. Hanson's [1971] argument suggests a fluctuation in Jewish religion between anti-historical [cosmic or mythological] and historical [prophetic] tendencies. He traces how, in the late prophetic era, the cosmic became foregrounded due to prevailing historical circumstances. Eventually, current historical events were seen as the result of a cosmic drama, and in the book of Daniel, salvation is found in rapture from the historical reality.

Koch (1985:123) seeks the reason for its eventual placement among the *Khətibim* in a transfer of the book from the prophetic corpus to the third section of the Hebrew Bible. He believes that the rabbis were responsible for this move. Their reason was a disappointment over the fact that their interpretation of Daniel 7:13–14 or 9:26 regarding the Roman Empire was frustrated by what actually happened during the 1st-century CE.

Although Koch (1985:124) admits that this suggestion is ‘pure conjecture’, he goes on to argue that, among the prophets, the book of Daniel is the ultimate manifestation of this tradition. This evidence he finds in Daniel’s higher title (the man greatly beloved), the eschatological perspective revealing ‘the dark and enigmatic’ word of the prophets by Daniel (cf. Daniel’s interpretation of Jeremiah in Dn 9) as well as the form-critical connection between Daniel 7–12 and other prophetic visions, for example Zechariah (Koch 1985:124–125). Koch relegates Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel to ‘preliminary spokesmen of the Word of God’ with Daniel being more than a (mere) prophet but a ‘man greatly beloved’. Thus, the book of Daniel ‘was incorporated into the prophetic part of Scriptures in pre-Christian times’ from where it spread its ‘light over all the prophets’ (Koch 1985:126). For Koch (1985:127), the reason for the book being retained in the third part of the Hebrew canon and not rejected altogether by the rabbis despite their disappointment is linked to the Roman Empire’s conduct towards both Jewish and Christian communities. Because of this conduct, the book received ‘an actualisation beyond all prophets’ (Koch 1985:128). Not only does Daniel stand within the prophetic tradition, the book also supersedes this literary form.

From a form-critical perspective, Koch notes that what is called apocalyptic does not have much in common with classical prophecy. Even if we take into account Petersen’s (1997:29) conclusion about diversity in the category ‘prophetic literature’, the content of the book of Daniel as a whole does not bear much resemblance to this form of writing. It has gone beyond that genre, although seeking to be linked to prophecy as will be noted below. Yet, the socio-political context that Koch suggests for explaining the development from prophecy to apocalyptic is not very convincing.

## Daniel and the wise

Another line of thought suggests that the book of Daniel does not fit into the prophetic corpus easily. In fact, it is suggested that there is a ‘great gulf which separates apocalyptic literature from prophecy’ (Von Rad 1965:306). Although rather ironically still discussing it under ‘classical prophecy’, Von Rad (1965:303) maintains that apocalyptic literature ‘never understands itself as prophecy’ and radically differs from prophecy as regards its ‘view of history’. He goes on to explain this discrepancy in greater detail by listing the following arguments (Von Rad 1965):

- The prophetic message is rooted in the saving event whereas, in apocalyptic literature, the saving event still lies in the future.



- The saving history was the backbone of the theology of the prophets whereas the apocalyptic literature is only concerned with the last generation of Israel and is not concerned with the previous (confessional) tradition.
- Apocalyptic literature sees a unity in world history that leads it to be deterministic while in classical prophecy 'nothing was predestined'.
- Apocalyptic thought exhibits a pessimistic view of the future in seeing all history gradually moving towards the great abyss while prophecy sees catastrophic events as Yahweh's intervention in history.
- In prophecy, the prophets stood firmly rooted in their own day and age while apocalyptic writers 'veiled their own standpoint in time'. (pp. 303–305)

On the basis of this, Von Rad concludes that the real matrix for apocalyptic literature should be the wisdom tradition. For Von Rad, 'wisdom' entails the classic description of 'the effort made by the people of Israel to grasp the laws which governed the world in which she lived, and systematise them' (Von Rad 1965:306).

Although Von Rad's proposal did not meet with favourable response, Bauckham (2010:44) notes that the problem, in fact, lies with his definition of wisdom, which includes only proverbial wisdom. When Müller (1971) focused this proposal on mantic wisdom, which had its origins in Babylonia, this thesis gained more credence. Mantic wisdom is connected to the understanding of dreams, visions and omens, and the characters of Daniel and Joseph in the OT are prime examples of this type of wisdom (Bauckham 2010:45).

The broader definition of wisdom to include mantic wisdom reflects a definite further literary distinction in the book of Daniel in addition to the prophetic tradition noted by Koch.

## Daniel and apocalypticism

Since the 1970s, it became commonplace to view the book of Daniel as part of a separate literary genre, namely apocalyptic literature.<sup>30</sup> Towards the end of that decade a publication, *Apocalypse: The morphology of a genre*, edited by John J. Collins (1979), set the tone for much of the subsequent work. It placed the book of Daniel in the context of related though non-biblical literature.

Applying the theory of Noll here, the book of Daniel was compiled to reflect ideas appealing to a growing number of people in society. These views may have been popular among certain elite group(s) although, as Plöger's suggestion of contradicting forces in society reflects, an apocalyptic mindset was surely also frowned upon by some.

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30. Collins [1998:2–3] notes that the term for a distinct type of literature goes back to Lücke's publication in 1832. However, it was only since the 1970s that this genre received due scholarly attention.

Nevertheless, the widespread occurrence of this type of literature (e.g. at Qumran) testifies to its popularity. However, in accommodating the somewhat offbeat world view inherent in this literature, the compiler(s) of the book of Daniel made sure that all 'orthodoxy' was not lost. Hence, the material was adapted by tapping into existing literary sources, which were probably already taken up in collections of culture-defining writings that would much later be labelled a canon.

The classic scholarly view as regards the growth of the book of Daniel, summarised by Collins (1993:38), has it that the book first emerged as a smaller collection of stories for a Jewish community in the ambit of the Persian Empire. This collection consisted of what are currently Chapters 4–6 (3:31–6:29 see MT), which are framed by an *inclusio* (3:31–33 and 6:27–28 see MT) in the form of doxologies. This inference is made on the basis of the notable difference between the Old Greek (OG) and MT texts of these chapters, which according to Collins (1993:38) 'allowed the development of two textual traditions in these chapters' (cf. Koch 1980:75). To this nucleus, the independent Aramaic stories of Chapters 1–3 were subsequently added before Chapter 7 (also in Aramaic) was appended 'early in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes' (Collins 1993:38) possibly to form an Aramaic book that may have circulated independently. Between 167–164 BCE, Chapters 8–12 were written in Hebrew and added to this Aramaic collection along with Chapter 1 being translated into Hebrew.<sup>31</sup>

Recently, this theory was challenged by arguing that Daniel 8–12 in fact formed the nucleus of an original prophetic book.<sup>32</sup> Here, this suggestion is summarised and then linked to the main thesis of this chapter, namely that the book in its final form presents different voices in the ancient Jewish society.

Based on the striking commonalities between Daniel 8:1 and the opening verses of the post-exilic prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah (see 1:1 in both cases), it is suggested that what currently is Daniel 8:1 served as opening verse for a prophetic corpus consisting of Daniel 8–12.<sup>33</sup> However, the compiler(s) took care when they introduced the symbolic world characteristic of apocalyptic literature. They made sure that the three visions still contained enough of what can be described as 'known

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31. In a study building on the theory of corpus-based translation studies, Van Deventer (2005:103) reaches the conclusion that Daniel 1 cannot be viewed as a translated text but should rather be seen as an original composition in Hebrew.

32. For the full argument related to this suggestion, see Van Deventer (2013). The idea of the later addition of the 'Aramaic portion of the book' to Chapters 8–12 was mooted independently by Snow Flesher (2014:137) in her discussion of a purposeful development of characters in the book from tricksters to martyrs.

33. These three visions had their separate growth histories, but this issue is not relevant for the current argument.

material', and in doing so, they ensured the acceptance of this material as part of a larger literary tradition.

I argue that these visions in their combined form relate to questions raised by the 2nd-century BCE community in Jerusalem. Van Deventer (2013) notes with regard to Chapters 8–12:

These chapters are connected by means of the questions they pose, which are related to the reason for ('why' in ch. 9) and duration of ('how long' in chs. 8; 9; 10–12) setting up the 'desolating abomination' in Jerusalem during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. (p. 253)

The answer given in these chapters is drastically different from the way in which this troubled time ultimately came to an end, namely through what is known as the Maccabean Revolt. Frequently, scholars argue that the absence of any reference to the ultimate result of this revolt, namely the rededication of the temple in 164 BCE, indicates that the *terminus ad quem* for the final redaction of the book of Daniel should be seen as prior to this date. What is overlooked, however, is that the compilers of Daniel shared a totally different and quietist world view compared to the militant Maccabees. Surely, in a book that has seen substantial development, even if the present hypothesis is not accepted, there could have been the chance to add a reference to the rededication of the temple *post eventum*. In fact, what should trouble scholars is why such an addition was not made. The answer put forward here is that the compilers of the book of Daniel did not see in the initial success of the Maccabees any guarantee of future well-being. This is the reason why their project is still extant as the voice of an influential group in the 2nd-century BCE community in Jerusalem.

To add further weight and perhaps credence to their quietist ideas expounded in the visions in Chapters 8–12, this group added to their 'prophetic collection' popular tales that reflected a similar outlook, especially regarding martyrdom in the face of (previous and future) persecution. These tales were selected from a larger number available and probably edited to conform to their needs.<sup>34</sup> The first addition to the prophetic corpus comprised of the stories currently found in Daniel 4–6. These stories share similarities with regard to style and content compared to Daniel 8–12. Stylistically, the sequence of foreign kings used in the visions is retained in these stories. Although the last king in the short series of prophecies, Cyrus (see 10:1), is mentioned in 6:29, it is obvious why this liberator of the Jews could not be the main character in the story in Daniel 6. Rather, Darius (see 9:1) fulfils the role of the foreign king in Daniel 6, and Belshazzar (see 8:1) gets this 'accolade' in Daniel 5. This means that a king that was not presented in the series of kings in the visions had to be chosen as foreign emperor in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar, the king responsible for the exile, seemed an obvious choice.

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34. Compare, for example, 4QPrNab to Daniel 4.

## A story about the book of Daniel

As regards content, Van Deventer (2013) shows how the stories in Daniel 4–6 relate to the visions in Daniel 8–12 when he argues:

In these stories the main character is seen as an *interpreter of dreams* (ch. 4) and *writings* (ch. 5), and a *martyr* who suffers at the hand of a foreign ruler, but is *vindicated* (ch. 6). The content and sequence of these narratives seem to be carefully considered and dictated by the themes of the three primary visions, that is, the interpretation of a *dream vision* (ch. 8), the *interpretation of a writing* from Jeremiah (ch. 9), and the ultimate *resurrection of the martyrs* (chs. 10–12). (pp. 256–257, [author's own emphasis])

The choice of the story in Daniel 4 to introduce the new compilation consisting of three narratives and three visions also links to a motive already referred to in this chapter, namely to provide a distinct link between the newer (prophetic or apocalyptic) material and older (narrative) material in the literary tradition. Daniel 4 reminds the reader of what is presently referred to as the Pentateuch where Joseph interprets the dreams of the Pharaoh (see Gn 41). Most modern-day interpreters overlook the fact that Daniel 4 is probably older than Daniel 2 and already discuss the relationship between Daniel and Joseph when dealing with Daniel 2 where Daniel serves as an interpreter of dreams for the first time in the book. This theme is seldom picked up again when modern interpreters<sup>35</sup> get to Daniel 4.

If Daniel 4 is indeed older than Daniel 2, as is suggested by even the mainline scholarly theory (Collins 1993:38), then more attention to the similarities between Daniel 4 and Genesis 41 is needed. In fact, it seems that Daniel 4 has more in common with Genesis 41 than Daniel 2. With regard to content, the story in Daniel 2 has a twist in the plot that does not occur in Genesis 41 and Daniel 4. In Daniel 2, the king wants the dream *and* the interpretation to be made known whereas in Genesis 41 and Daniel 4 the king tells the dream to the Jewish interpreter and only awaits the interpretation. The longer rendition in Daniel 2 obviously builds on a shorter and less complex original (Dn 4). In all the narratives, the king's sages were not up for the task, but uniquely in Daniel 2, the king wants them dead for their inability – a notion absent in Genesis 41 and Daniel 4.

Now we can ask what the function of this story could have been in the suggested 2nd-century context. Collins (1993:234) suggests that 'the story expresses a stubborn hope for the reclamation of even the most arrogant tyrant and for universal recognition of the Most High God.' In short, there is always the possibility that an arrogant ruler, present or future, can come to real insight (and repent).

However, the aforementioned may not happen, and this is the scenario in the next story, namely Daniel 5. This chapter has close affinities with the previous. First of all, it is also an interpretation story but with a difference: It is not a dream that has to be

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35. Goldingay (1989:171) is the only modern commentator noted to make a direct (linguistic) link between Daniel 4 and Genesis 41.

interpreted, but a text (as in Dn 9). Again, the king's counsellors are not able to come up with an interpretation of the writing on the wall, despite the wondrous rewards offered by the shaken monarch. Secondly, there is a direct reference to the previous story. In 5:18–21, Daniel introduces his (eventual) interpretation of the writing, which is briefly noted in verses 25–28, by means of an admonition. He summarises the fate that befell Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 4 and goes on to mention that Belshazzar has 'not humbled [his] heart even though [he] knew all this' (v. 22). Therefore, Belshazzar will be removed, and he meets this fate the very same night (v. 30). As to the function of this tale, Collins (1993:255) rightly notes that Chapter 5 serves as a counterpoint to Chapter 4:<sup>36</sup> 'In the first the king is humbled and repents; in the second he fails to learn his lesson.' In short, there is a possibility that a proud foreign ruler, who does not repent, can be removed.

In a social context shaken to its foundations by bloody persecution, there could be another possible scenario: The foreign ruler has been forced by others (insiders?) to turn against a specific community or individual. This possibility sets the scene for the introduction of the last of the Danielic short stories that was selected from those in circulation among the Jewish population to be added to the three prophetic visions.

Daniel 6 differs from the other two stories in this collection since it is not a tale of interpretation but rather of persecution. Here, as in the two previous stories, the OG differs quite substantially from the MT in the sense that the conspiracy against Daniel is of a much smaller scale (involving only Daniel's two fellow ministers and not the 120 satraps mentioned in the MT). Furthermore, it is important to note that the highest political authority, the king, is not the instigator of the animosity against the Jewish courtier. The conspiracy is inspired by jealous courtiers on the same (or lower) rank than the Jewish protagonist.

As regards theme, this story has no link to the previous two. The content deals with another possible scenario that the Jews might have faced in a troubled time, namely that of fierce competition, jealousy and even treachery from others, which in turn may even lead to death. These 'others' could include non-Jews, as for example in the similar plot that occurs in the book of Esther (Collins 1993:40), but if one considers specific psalms as literary antecedent for Daniel 6 (Van Deventer 2015:838–844), these people may have included fellow Jews, as seems to be the case in Daniel 11:32. During the time of Antiochus IV, this insider animosity could easily have led to the persecution this chapter has as theme.

In conclusion, it seems that enough evidence exists to support the idea that the book of Daniel started out as a collection of three visions that now form Daniel 8–12 and that are linked structurally with other post-exilic prophecies (e.g. Haggai and Zechariah). With regard to content, these visions diverted somewhat from classic prophecy and

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 36. Lenglet (1972) has elaborated on the chiasmic structure of the Aramaic section of the book that is reflected in the similarities between Chapters 2 and 7, 3 and 6, and 4 and 5.

introduced newer (apocalyptic) ideas in the wake of the Antiochene crisis. These visions reflect answers to questions related to the reason for and duration of the turmoil in Jerusalem. Towards the end of all three visions, a different answer is given related to the duration of these horrific events (Dn 8:14, 9:24, 12:11–12). Following Noll (2001), it is argued that these answers reflect the ideas of different strands of thought among the religious elite but are collected to present these as part of a unified identity amid a time of severe strife.

A next phase in the development of what became the book of Daniel was introduced when three popular stories, related to the figure of Daniel, were added to these three visions. The stories reflect less concern for the duration of the persecution and rather put forward different ideas about how the situation caused by the foreign ruler may change. These stories were chosen and adapted so that each links up with an aspect presented in the visions, as noted above. However, they also mirror different opinions in this regard which attest to the sociological reason of identity formation that Noll suggests for the development of a (religious) canon. It seems that the book of Daniel presents us with an example of this in essence.

Next, we shall consider the final chapters in the story of the book of Daniel.

## When more voices need to be heard

It was already noted that Davies (2001) does not wish to see a clear link between genre and social groups. Hence, the addition of further material to the book of Daniel should perhaps be viewed in light of further views in a particular group regarding the Antiochene crisis within the quietist segment of Jewish society.

The first of these views is represented by what is currently Daniel 3. This chapter is linked to the idea of persecution already taken up in Daniel 6 discussed above. Daniel 3 had to sharpen this perspective by stating that even group martyrdom was acceptable within this social stratum. Daniel 6 highlights the idea of individual martyrdom, which was acceptable and laudable in the more militant context of the Maccabees as a last resort. However, as Boccaccini (2002:164) indicates, group martyrdom as proposed in Daniel 3 by this more quietist group was seen as an irresponsible act in the Maccabean context. This view among the quietist Daniel group in Jewish society found their voice with the addition of Daniel 3 to the three stories and three visions discussed above.

This addition called for a new introduction to the collected series of tales and visions. In the previous collection, such an introduction was provided by the words of the powerful character of King Nebuchadnezzar in what is at present Daniel 4:1 (MT). In order to be seen as still truthful to the law of God (just as the more militant Maccabean group), the story in Daniel 1 was added to introduce this group's view on the importance

of dietary regulations, which are also highlighted in the Maccabean context, especially regarding food restrictions and martyrdom. This new story was written in Hebrew and introduced all the major characters (Jews and foreign rulers) mentioned in the subsequent tales and visions in Daniel 3–6 and Daniel 8–12. The choice of language meant that the book started and ended in Hebrew while keeping an equal balance of languages (what became Daniel 1, 8, 9, 10–12 in Hebrew and Daniel 3, 4, 5, 6 in Aramaic).

The final addition to the book came in the form of two similar texts, both written in Aramaic and both focusing on a more general view of time, opposed to the years and even days mentioned thus far in the collected material as answers to the question on the duration of the persecution. With these precise calculations seemingly not materialising, another scheme was introduced (Dn 2, 7). This scheme relies on the notion of four successive world empires that are eventually replaced by the kingdom of God and that defeat these earthly rulers ‘by no human hand’ (Dn 2:34). However, with the Maccabean Revolt achieving initial success, the group responsible for this quietist view probably reacted by collecting and preserving their views as alternative to the more militant and, perhaps at the time, more influential Maccabean position. Their own position, with its differentiating internal emphases, was seen as prominent enough to award it a place in what later became the canon of the Hebrew Bible.

The quietist strand in Judaism in the middle of the 2nd-century BCE. preserved a form of religion in society that caught the imagination of later generations who interpreted the open-ended, latest additions (Dn 2, 7) to what became the book of Daniel as having a bearing on their own time. In other contexts, this was not enough, and the book was expanded further by adding stories related to the figure of Daniel (as attested to in the Deutero-Canonical corpus).

## ■ Conclusion

This chapter indicated that the development of the book of Daniel can be linked to a more general theory about the formation of religious canons. This theory, here presented by the work of Noll, claims that the development of religious canons is (also) a social process aimed at identity creation in the face of threatening events. The study showed that, even within social groups that share certain foundational characteristics such as the anti-militant stance of the Daniel group, there is room for different perspectives. These perspectives relate, for example, to how long crises will last and how they will eventually end. The chapter also claimed that a newer approach to the development of the redaction of the book of Daniel can fit in with this view. From the initial three visions, the book of Daniel found itself on a developmental trajectory that can still be witnessed today in the fixed forms of at least three canonical traditions where this book is not only placed in different contexts but even has different contents.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 4

This chapter investigates why and how the book of Daniel originated. As such, this does not present a novel problem related to the book. The novelty that this chapter seeks to relate to regarding this old problem is situated in two new perspectives from which to study the question of the redaction history of the book of Daniel. Firstly, it applies a theory related to the sociological origin of 'canonical' lists to the individual collection of Daniel material. Secondly, the chapter proposes how a recently developed theory on the redaction of the book fits into this application.



# Calvinism and Anabaptism: Is the debate still relevant?

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## Introduction

The year 2017 is the year of the 500th commemoration of the 16th-century Reformation. The 31st of October 1517 is acknowledged worldwide as the official beginning of the Protestant Reformation. On that day, Martin Luther (1483–1546) nailed his well-known 95 theses on the value of indulgences on the door of the church in Wittenberg (cf. Smith 1993:59–60). It must be noted though that, even centuries before this date, people like Peter Waldes (12th century), John Wycliff (14th century), John Hus (15th century), Savonarola (15th century), Wessel Gansfort (1419–1489) and others had raised their voices against the heretical doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church (D’Assonville 2016:45–47). Together with Martin Luther and also after his death, the following Reformers came to the fore: Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Philip Melancton,

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Heinrich Bullinger, John Calvin and John Knox (D'Assonville 2016:47). To this day, the most well-known and influential of them all is John Calvin.

Although the Reformation focused primarily on the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, this chapter focuses on another very important aspect of the Reformation, namely the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists and the relevance of this debate in 2017. Calvin was not the only Reformer who was involved in debates with the Anabaptists. It was also the case with Martin Luther (Walker, Norris, Lotz & Handy 1997:361), Zwingli (cf. Janz 2008:183–243; Bergsma Friesen 1993:3) and others like Oecolampadius in Zürich and Basel and Bucer in Strasbourg (Balke 2009:146). In this chapter, however, the focus is specifically on the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists.

## ■ Problem statement

In the context stated above, the aim of the chapter is, firstly, to give a short overview of the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists with the emphasis on the doctrinal issues involved. Secondly, the aim is to determine the relevance of the debate for today by identifying which of the doctrinal issues are still on the table.

In this regard, the research of Bergsma Friesen (1993) is important.<sup>37</sup> Bergsma Friesen (1993:1) focuses on 'understanding the theological differences that currently exist' between the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions. In her thesis, she re-examines the 'content and nature of the theological debate between the Reformed, as articulated by John Calvin, and the Anabaptists, as voiced by Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons' (Bergsma Friesen 1993:1). In the end, the research of Bergsma Friesen consists of three sections, namely the Baptism issue, free will and predestination, and hermeneutics. As far as the modern-day examination is concerned, her research is limited to the Dutch schools on the Reformed side and the General Conference of Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren Churches on the Anabaptist side (Bergsma Friesen 1993:1–2). In this chapter, the focus as far as the modern-day examination is concerned, will primarily be on the Reformed confessions, the viewpoints in modern-day Calvinism and then specific Anabaptist (Pentecostal) viewpoints in the South African context.

## ■ The doctrines of the Anabaptists

Anabaptism developed around 1520–1530, mainly in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, and is also known as the 'radical Reformation' or the 'left wing of the

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37. Bergsma Friesen is a multiple subjects or resource teacher at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener. She says (Bergsma Friesen 1993:1) that she is someone 'with interests and sympathies that span both the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions.'

Reformation' (Compaan 2008:41). According to Janz (2008:200), 'Swiss Anabaptism had its origins in a major rift that developed between Zwingli and some of his younger and more radical followers.' Lane (2007:189) affirms that Zwingli and radicals like Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz and others had maintained a common front until 1523, but the issues of the state-church and infant baptism divided them.

Packull (2004:194) points out the variety of Anabaptist groups in the 16th century.<sup>38</sup> He mentions, among others, the Swiss Brethren, the Hutterites, the Melchiorite-Münsterites and the Mennonites. Balke (2009:146) states that the 'Anabaptists formed a widespread and varied movement at the time of the Reformation, of which the diverse currents cannot simply be lumped into one common denominator.' Van Veen (2009:158) emphasises the distinction between the Anabaptists and the Libertines who were even more radical. According to Walker et al. (1997:441), the cause of the Reformation was threatened by the rapid spread of the Anabaptists at a certain stage.

As far as Anabaptist theology is concerned, Packull (2004) states the following:

Any attempt at constructing a comprehensive Anabaptist theology runs the risk of imposing foreign structure and foreign criteria on Anabaptist thoughts. Robert Friedman held that Anabaptism produced no explicit theology, but through the study of scriptures, nurtured an 'existential' faith. Walter Klaassen made a similar point, suggesting that Anabaptists had little use for 'idea-ism', placing the emphasis instead on discipleship, or faith lived. In other words, Anabaptists, were more concerned with orthopraxis than orthodoxy. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to identify a theological core. (pp. 198–199)

He (Packull 2004:199–219) then proceeds to deal with the following doctrinal topics: Scripture and its interpretation, God and creation, anthropology, Christology and soteriology, ecclesiology, political theology, eschatology as well as Anabaptist and spiritual relations.

Bergsma Friesen (1993:11) is also of the opinion that it is impossible 'to point to a normative, uniform "Anabaptist Voice" or a single systematic "Anabaptist Theology" of the sixteenth century.' However, she (Friesen 1993:12) is convinced that there are certain Anabaptist figures whose theological views were well articulated and who have remained significant for modern-day Anabaptist theology. She then chooses Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons to represent an Anabaptist perspective.

The first 'official' document' from the Anabaptist end was formulated in 1527 by the Swiss Brethren. It consisted of seven articles of faith and is known as the Schleitheim Confession. The main author was probably Michael Sattler (Lane 2007:190). The seven articles cover the main points of difference between the Anabaptists and the Reformers,

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<sup>38</sup> Prof. W.O. Packull is professor at the Conrad Grebel University, named after one of the first Anabaptist leaders.

and Lane (2007; cf. also inter alia Smith 1988:245; Walker et al. 1997:452) gives the following summary:

- Baptism is not for infants but for those who have already consciously decided to be Christians.
- Baptised believers who fall into sin and refuse correction are to be banned from fellowship.
- The breaking of bread is a fellowship meal in remembrance of Jesus Christ and is only for baptised disciples.
- Believers are to be (kept) separate from this wicked world – which includes the Roman and Protestant state churches as well as military service.
- Pastors are to be chosen from men of good repute in the world. They are to be supported by their flock.
- The [*magistrate's*] sword is ordained by God to be used by worldly magistrates to punish the wicked. In the church, the only weapon to be used is excommunication. Jesus Christ forbids the use of violence so the Christian cannot accept the office of magistrate.
- It is wrong for Christians to swear oaths. (p. 190).

With further reference to and apart from this summary of the Schleithem Confession, I now present a brief overview of the following main Anabaptist viewpoints as far as they are relevant within the scope of this chapter: baptism, free will and predestination, original sin, view on Scripture, hermeneutics, Word and Spirit and inner word.<sup>39</sup>

As far as baptism is concerned, the decision for adult baptism instead of infant or paedobaptism came from former supporters of Zwingli such as Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock and others (Packull 2004:210). The decision was also based on the views of Hubmaier (Walker et al. 1997:448). The first adult baptism, that of George Blaurock, took place on 21 January 1525 (Walker et al. 1997:449). The Anabaptist view, based on their study of the Scriptures, was that baptism was for adults only (Packull 2004:210). The ‘most salient’ argument was based on a literal reading of the syntax of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16 (Packull 2004:210). They also argued that no child baptisms had been recorded in the NT (Packull 2004:210). Bergsma Friesen (1993:20) concludes that Hubmaier’s view is based on a literal approach to the NT Scriptures and a possible unawareness or diminishing of any role of the OT in the Reformer’s arguments (Bergsma Friesen 1993:21). Menno Simons, another leading Anabaptist, had similar arguments for adult baptism, namely Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:9 as well as an appeal ‘to the explicit sense’ of NT Scripture (Bergsma Friesen 1993:30).

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39. Packull (2004:201–219) also deals with the following doctrinal issues which are not especially relevant within the scope of this chapter: God and creation, anthropology, Christology and soteriology, restoration of the pristine church, the Lord’s Supper, the ban, foot washing, eschatology and political theology. The same applies to the office of pastor and the oath (cf. Van Veen 2009:153–154).

On the doctrine of free will and predestination, it is stated that the Anabaptists and Reformers differed on no other point as strongly as on the bondage of the will (Bergsma Friesen 1993:60). Bergsma Friesen (1993:74) comes to the conclusion that the Anabaptist Hubmaier was a strong advocate of free will but did not reject the concept of predestination in its entirety. He also did not believe that his notion of free will implied works of righteousness. Furthermore, it was critical to Hubmaier that the grace of God be offered to all, 'any (but only those) who reject it, are subject to God's judgement. If this is not the case, God is simply unjust' (Bergsma Friesen 1993:74). As with Hubmaier, Menno Simons also had an 'unrelenting belief in the free will of humanity' (Bergsma Friesen 1993:78).

The controversy over baptism led to the Anabaptist notion that there is no such thing as original sin and that children remain innocent until they sin deliberately (Packull 2004:204). Anabaptists, therefore, did not blame original sin for their failings (Packull 2004:204). It is furthermore the conviction of Packull (2004) that there is consensus among Anabaptists on voluntarism:

Anabaptists had come to the conclusion that the theology of the major reformers was flawed and that it undermined human accountability. Hence Anabaptist theology was weighted toward a voluntarism made possible through Christ's redeeming work. (p. 205)

Although agreement exists that Anabaptists adopted the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, Packull (2004:199) clearly points out that there are fundamental differences between the Anabaptists and Reformers as far as the view and use of Scripture are concerned. In the first place, the Anabaptist interpretation of a text like Matthew 15:13 (All plants which the Heavenly Father has not planted should be uprooted) led to the view that everything not explicitly commanded in the Scriptures needed to be uprooted. Furthermore, it was assumed that the Scriptures were 'bright and clear' and in no need of glosses, that is interpretation (Packull 2004:199).

Very significant as far as the view on Scripture is concerned is the remark of Bergsma Friesen (1993:132) that, for many Anabaptists, 'the Word of God extends beyond the Bible – "the Word of God can also come directly to the believer in the heart".' I shall come back to this point later in this chapter.

A further point is that, from its very inception, Anabaptism was pro-NT in orientation 'with a preference for the teachings of Jesus, such as the Sermon on the Mount' (Packull 2004:199; cf. also Floor 1970:8).

As far as hermeneutics are concerned, Bergsma Friesen (1993:129) concludes, after dealing with the issues of baptism, free will and predestination, that 'the question of hermeneutics continually emerges from the discussion.' Bergsma Friesen (1993:131) then continues to point out that the view of the relationship between the Old and New Testament (as mentioned in the previous paragraph) is a crucial factor in Anabaptist hermeneutics. Apart from this, Bergsma Friesen (1993:134) mentions as central ideas in Anabaptist hermeneutics a so-called

‘hermeneutics of obedience’, Christocentrism, the clarity of Scripture, the letter and the spirit, and the congregation as interpreter or hermeneutic community.

Packull (2004:199–200) also mentions the view of the congregation as a hermeneutic community, but he points out some problems in this regard as well as differing views among Anabaptist groups.

The point mentioned above, that for many Anabaptists the Word of God extends beyond the Bible, actually comes to a separation of Word and Spirit. Packull (2004:217) also refers to Anabaptists like Denck who emphasises the inner word, ‘even more problematic is the case of David Joris, who evolved toward an elusive inspirationalism, complete with dreams and visions.’

## ■ Calvin’s response to the Anabaptists

John Calvin did not only defend the Reformed doctrine against the Roman Catholic doctrine but also (just as strongly) against the Anabaptist doctrine (Balke 2009:148, 1973:43; cf. also Floor 1970:16).

As far as the Anabaptists are concerned, Balke (2009:146) is of the opinion that Zwingli, Oecolampadius and Bucer had considerably more to do with the radicals than Calvin. Bergsma Friesen (1993:3) also mentions that the historical connection between Calvin and the Anabaptists is much less obvious. However, Bergsma Friesen (1993) states categorically:

Calvin’s theological writings and treatises deal, thoroughly and regularly, with the subject of Anabaptist theology. In fact, I believe it can be argued that Calvin was unique among the Reformers in that he alone was acquainted with theological arguments from several of the main branches of the Anabaptist reformation, including those of the Swiss Brethren (Conrad Grebel), South German Anabaptists (Thomas Müntzer), and Dutch Anabaptists (Melchior Hoffman and Menno Simons). (p. 4)

In his evaluation of the so-called radicals, Calvin distinguishes clearly between the Anabaptists and a more radical group, known as the Libertines (*libertins spirituels*) (Balke 2009:147; Bergsma Friesen 1993:8; Farley 1982:25; Wyneken 1965:18).

According to Balke (2009:148), Calvin knew how to win some Anabaptists over to his viewpoint (cf. also Wyneken 1965:22). One of them was Jean Stordeur (Balke 2009:148). After Stordeur’s death, Calvin married his widow, Idolette de Bure, in August 1540 (Balke 1973:134, 136; Wyneken 1965:22). Balke (1973:134, 139) is even of the opinion that the knowledge Calvin got from his wife regarding the Anabaptists was very important and that she may have influenced him.

The fact is that Calvin had a thorough knowledge of the different doctrines of the Anabaptist movement (cf. also Farley 1982:19). Although he respected their moments of

truth (Balke 2009:148), he also rejected their radicalism and even called Anabaptism a ‘pestilential’ doctrine (Wyneken 1965:22, quoting from a letter of Calvin to Farel in September 1538; cf. also Farley 1982:21). Calvin even spoke about the ‘plague of the Anabaptists’ (Farley 1982:21). Van Veen (2009) states the following:

Calvin challenged his opponents [*including the Anabaptists*] in every possible way: he wrote treatises against them; he warned correspondents against them by letter; he used the pulpit to warn his listeners about their ideas; and when he met them he would oppose them in debate. In short, Calvin used every means of communication available to him. (pp. 162–163)

Against the Anabaptists, Calvin wrote his ‘*Brieve instruction pour armer tous bons fideles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des Anabaptistes*’ in 1544 [Brief instruction for arming all the good faithful against the errors of the common sect of the Anabaptists].<sup>40</sup> In the preface of this treatise, Calvin (Farley 1982:37) speaks of the ‘poisonous character of the doctrine of the Anabaptists.’ In the introduction to the treatise (Farley 1982:41), he states ‘that what these poor people maintain with common accord as the invincible foundation of their faith, is a mortal error as deadly as the plague.’ He also dealt extensively with the doctrines of the Anabaptists in his *Institutes*.

It is significant in this regard that Calvin, already in the first edition of the *Institutes*, defended the Reformers in France against the accusations of the Anabaptists (Balke 1973:37; Farley 1982:20–1; Wyneken 1965:20f). In the following editions of the *Institutes* (1559), he just elaborated on the specific issues.<sup>41</sup> This fact, namely that Calvin had already written the first edition of the *Institutes* in 1536 with the purpose to clearly point out the differences with the Anabaptists, to a certain extent contradicts the statement made by Balke (1973:139), as mentioned above, of the possible influence of Idolette on Calvin. When Calvin wrote his first edition of the *Institutes*, he had not yet known Idolette.

In his letter to the King of France that remained almost unchanged from the first to the last edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote openly about the Anabaptists. He dissociated himself categorically from them and called them instruments of Satan<sup>42</sup> (Balke 1973:41; Van Veen 2009:163). Furthermore, he accused the Anabaptists of being ‘poor theologians’ and ‘of ignoring the consequences of their own doctrines and therefore becoming “more severe than God” Himself, and of making “men and their morals” their theological norm rather than God’ (Farley 1982:29). Having said this and more, Farley (1982:31), with reference to Balke, points out that Calvin deals with the Anabaptists ‘in an exceptionally fair manner for his times.’ Wyneken (1965:22) mentions the ‘depth and accuracy’ of Calvin’s grasp of the Anabaptist teachings as it becomes clear in the *Institutes*.

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40. I made use of the translation of Farley [1982].

41. The 1559 edition of the *Institutes* is used, as translated by Beveridge.

42. *Satanae ministros* [CO 2.24].

Next, we give a short overview of Calvin's response to the Anabaptists on the relevant doctrines.

'With respect to infant baptism Calvin argues that the Anabaptists ignore the whole covenantal context of grace and election' (Farley 1982:28–29). In his evaluation of the first article of the Schleithem Confession, Calvin (in Farley 1982:46–47) also emphasises the covenant very strongly. When someone who has not been received into the covenant of God from his childhood is led into faith and repentance by the doctrine of salvation, his posterity is at the same time made part of the family of the church. 'And for this reason infants of believers are baptised by virtue of this covenant, made with their fathers in their name and to their benefit' (Farley 1982:46–47). Calvin (in Farley 1982:49–50) then continues to point out the similarity between circumcision in the OT and baptism.

In the *Institutes*, (4.16) writes a whole chapter on paedobaptism. Paedobaptism is of divine origin as is clearly demonstrated by the promises of God (*Inst.* 4.16.1-2).<sup>43</sup> The only difference between circumcision and baptism is in the external ceremony (*Inst.* 4.16.4)<sup>44</sup> The argument for paedobaptism is founded on the covenant which God made with Abraham (*Inst.* 4.16.6).<sup>45</sup> In the rest of the chapter (*Inst.* 4.16.10-32), he then deals extensively with the arguments of the Anabaptists and Servetus.

Calvin deals with the doctrine on original sin, inter alia, in Book II of the *Institutes*. By falling into sin, Adam not only perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and on earth but also caused the deterioration of the whole human race (*Inst.* 2.1.5). Calvin explains this further:

Therefore, since through man's fault, a curse has extended above and below, over all the regions of the world, there is nothing unreasonable in its extending to all his offspring. After the heavenly image in man was effaced, he not only was himself punished by a withdrawal of the ornaments in which he had been arrayed – viz. wisdom, virtue, justice, truth and holiness, and by the substitution in their place of those dire pests, blindness, impotence, vanity, impurity and unrighteousness, but he involved his posterity also, and plunged them into the

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43. CO 2:976, 977. '*Argumento sane in speciem favorabili paedobaptismum impugnant, nulla Dei institutione fundatum esse iactando, sed hominum duntaxat audacia, pravaque curiositate inventum, stulta deinde facilitate usu temere receptum. Sacramentum enim nisi certo verbi Dei fundamento nitatur, de filo pendet. Principio dogma est satis notum, et inter pios omnes confessum, rectam signorum considerationem non in externis duntaxat caeremoniis sitam esse, verum a promissione pendere potissimum, ac mysteriis spiritualibus, quibus figurandis caeremonias ipsas Dominus ordinat.*'

44. CO 2:978. '*Quae restat dissimilitudo, ea in caeremonia exteriori iacet, quae minima est portio; quum potissima pars a promissione et re signata pendeat.*'

45. CO 2:979. '*Siquidem evidentissimum est, quod semel cum Abrahamo Dominus foedus percussit, non minus hodie Christianis constare quam olim iudaico populo, adeoque cerbum istud non minus Christianos respicere, quam Iudeos tum respiciebat.*'



same wretchedness. This is the hereditary corruption to which early Christian writers gave the name of Original Sin, meaning by the term the depravation of a nature formerly good and pure. (p. 214)<sup>46</sup>

In *Institutes* 2.1.8 he then gives the following definition for original sin:

Original Sin then, may be defined as a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh. (p. 217)<sup>47</sup>

It is important to note that, in his disputes with the Anabaptists, Calvin always comes to the point of sound hermeneutics: 'In each instance, the critical issue is the hermeneutical one' (Farley 1982:28). Although Calvin admits that the Anabaptists want to submit themselves to the authority of the Holy Scripture, the key question is the correct interpretation of Scripture (Balke 1973:338). 'For Calvin the Sola Scriptura is inextricably tied to the Sola Gratia, while the Anabaptists fall back on the free will and thereby slide into papist synergism' (Balke 2009:150). Furthermore, according to Farley (1982:26), Calvin points out that the Anabaptist's interpretation of Scripture lacks a kind of normative principle, thus permitting them 'to deduce conclusions that are actually contrary to Scripture.' The Anabaptists expound their texts so improperly as to complicate a true exposition (Farley 1982:26). According to Calvin, the Anabaptists use texts out of context (Balke 1973:339). For Calvin, the task of theology (i.e. hermeneutics) requires more than an ability to cite texts. Farley (1982) puts it in the following words:

It demands understanding, knowledge, insight, reason, an ability to think through a doctrine's consequences, an awareness of moral ramifications, and above all, a devotion to the pure and plain Word of God in its true and natural sense. (p. 30)

Farley (1982:26) in this regard refers to Stauffer, who calls Calvin a true '*homo theologicus*'.

Floor (1970) deals extensively with Calvin's hermeneutics and its relevance for our times. He (Floor 1970:4) points out the following hermeneutical characteristics of Calvin's

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46. CO 2:179. '*Quum ergo sursum et deorsum ex eius culpa fluxerit maledictio, quae grassatur per omnes mundi plagas, nihil a ratione alienum, so propagata fuerit ad totam eius sobolem. Postquam ergo in eo oblitterata fuit coelestis imago, non solus sustinuit hanc poenam, ut in locum sapientiae, virtutis, sanctitatis, veritatis, iustitiae, quibus ornamentis vestitus fuerat, teterrimae cederent pestes, caecitas, impotentia, impuritas, vanitas, iniustitia; sed iisdem quoque miseris implicuit suam progeniem ac immersit. Haec est haereditaria corruptio, quam peccatum originale veteres nuncuparunt, peccati voce intelligentes naturae antea bonae puraque deprivationem.*'

47. CO 2:182. '*Videtur ergo peccatum originale haereditaria naturae nostrae pravitas et corruptio, in omnes animae partes diffusa; quae primum facit reos irae Dei, tum etiam opera in nobis profert quae scriptura vocat opera carnis.*'

exegesis: It is exegesis of God's inspired Word, it is revelational-historical, it is kingdom exegesis, it is always oriented on the church, it is always tested from a doctrinal point of view, and it is pneumatologically structured.

Closely related to this issue is Calvin's view of the relationship between Word and Spirit. In this regard, Floor (1970:16) refers to Calvin's commentary on the book of Ezekiel in which he rejects the doctrine of the Anabaptists and emphasises the indissoluble link between Word and Spirit. In his *Institutes* (1.9.1), Calvin categorically declares against the Libertines (although the same principle applies to the Anabaptists):

Those who, rejecting Scripture, imagine that they have some peculiar way of penetrating to God, are to be deemed not so much under the influence of error as madness. For certain giddy men have lately appeared, who, while they make a great display of the superiority of the Spirit, reject all reading of the Scriptures themselves, and deride the simplicity of those who only delight in what they call the dead and deadly letter. (p. 84)<sup>48</sup>

D'Assonville (2009:380–381) also stresses the intrinsic bond between Word and Spirit in the theology of Calvin. He (D'Assonville 2009:380–381) refers to Calvin's reply to the letter of Sadoletto where Calvin stresses the point that Scripture, as the Word of God, and cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit (D'Assonville 2009; cf. also Wyneken 1965:23):

Calvin's emphasis refers to the Roman Catholic Church, with its insistence on the authority of the church, as well as to the Anabaptists, with their claims regarding the Spirit within them. The Spirit has bound himself irrevocably to his Word. The Spirit has been promised not to reveal new *doctrina*, but to impress the truth of the gospel on our minds. (p. 381)

The viewpoint of the Spirit is revealed in Scripture. Any so-called revelations must be tested against Scripture (Balke 1973:98).

It is also against the Anabaptists that Calvin stresses the relationship between the two testaments (Balke 1973:99). Calvin found the Anabaptists guilty of teaching a false relationship between the Old and New Testament. 'He felt that they denied a spiritual salvation for Old Testament people' (Wyneken 1965:23). In the *Institutes* (2.10; 2.11), Calvin deals extensively with the unity between the Old and New Testament. The five differences that he distinguishes do not disrupt the unity. On the contrary, the differences belong to the mode of administration rather than the substance. Both Testaments are two parts of the very same Word (Balke 1973:101).

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48. CO 2:69. *'Porro qui repudiata scriptura nescio quam ad Deum penetrandi viam imaginantur, non tam errore teneri quam rabie exagitari putandi sunt. Emerserunt enim nuper vertiginosi quidam, qui spiritus magisterium fastuosissime obtinentes, lectionem ipsi omnem respuunt, et eorum irrident simplicitatem qui mortuam et occidentem, ut ipsi vocant, literam adhuc consecretantur.'*

## ■ The relevance of the debate today

Scholars, some of whom work from a Pentecostal paradigm, agree that the roots of modern-day Pentecostalism can inter alia be traced back to 16th-century Anabaptism. Bruner (1970) states the following:

The ancestral line of the Pentecostal movement could appear to stretch from the enthusiastic Corinthians (1 Cor 12–14) or even the Old Testament anointed and ecstatic (e.g. Num 11; 1 Sam 10), through the gnostics of all varieties, the Montanists, the medieval and the pre-reformation spiritualists, the so-called radical, left-wing, or Anabaptist movements ... (p. 35)

Clark and Lederle (1983:8–10) agree with Bruner, namely that '[i]n the mould of the radical Reformation both revivalism and Anabaptism have developed along lines often similar to Pentecost.' Anderson<sup>49</sup> (2004:19, 23) also deals with the Montanist movement as well as the Anabaptist movement as part of the historical and theological background of Pentecostalism.<sup>50</sup> Archer and Hamilton (2010) point out the commonalities between the Anabaptism-Pietism and Pentecostalism traditions.<sup>51</sup> Byrd (2008) deals extensively with the link between Anabaptists of the 16th century and Pentecostalism of the 20th century. He (Bird 2008) espouses the following conviction concerning the Swiss Brethren:

[P]robably the first group to be called Anabaptists, practiced a form of spirituality that was very similar to the modern movement's experience in nature, character and form ... Swiss Anabaptist spirituality does in fact reflect Pentecostalism in the modern sense of the term. (p. 50)

It is furthermore significant that Maris, in his evaluation of the Pentecostal movement, frequently refers to the viewpoints of Calvin in the 16th century (cf. inter alia Maris 1992:20, 21, 252–262). There can be no doubt about the similarities between Anabaptism and Pentecostalism.

After dealing very briefly in the section above with the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists on a few doctrinal issues in the 16th century, the question has to be answered whether this debate is still relevant today. In this regard, Balke (1973:9) makes the statement that our time bears a clear resemblance to the 16th century. With reference to

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49. Anderson is an Anglo-Zimbabwean theologian and professor of Mission and Pentecostal studies at the University of Birmingham.

50. Scholars also agree that, after the 16th century, a number of movements form part of the antecedents of Pentecostalism, namely the Pietist, Wesleyan and revivalist movements of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Irvingite movement as well as Charles Finney and the 19th-century holiness movement [cf. inter alia Anderson 2004:24, 25; Bruner 1970:35].

51. Hamilton is shaped by Anabaptist-Pietism and Archer by Pentecostalism [Archer & Hamilton 2010:186].

Van Ruler, he points out that the Anabaptists gave their own interpretation of the Gospel that was neither Roman Catholic nor Reformed (Balke 1973:9). The questions of the 16th century are more relevant than ever (Balke 1973:348).

Other scholars agree with the relevance of this debate for today. Bergsma Friesen (1973:10) wrote her thesis because she was convinced that, 'there is much to be gained from a close examination of the *nature* of the theological debate that took place between Calvin and the Anabaptists.' On the issue of baptism, Bergsma Friesen (1973:57) comes to the conclusion that there is an 'uncanny' similarity in modern-day practice between both traditions. As far as the doctrine on free will and predestination is concerned, she (Bergsma Friesen 1973:120) concludes, '[t]he heirs of both the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions officially maintain a theological position regarding free will and predestination that is virtually indistinguishable from their earliest confessions.' As far as hermeneutical issues are concerned, the relevance of the debate today cannot be doubted as will be pointed out more clearly below.

We find the Anabaptist tradition not only in directly related groups like the Mennonites (cf. Bergsma Friesen 1973) but also (even more so, as far as numbers and influence are concerned) in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements of our time, in the sense that the same viewpoints on a number of doctrinal issues are still maintained by these groups. We will focus on a few of these issues.

Taking into account what was said above about the historical and theological background (Montanism, Anabaptism, Wesleyanism, holiness movement, etc.), modern-day Pentecostalism is usually traced back to an outbreak of 'speaking-in-tongues' in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901 under the leadership of Charles Fox Parham and the so-called Azusa Street revival in an abandoned church in downtown Los Angeles in 1906 that launched Pentecostalism as a worldwide movement. The Azusa Street services were led by William J. Seymore, a black Holiness preacher from Houston and a student of Parham (Synan 2006:531–2; cf. also Hollenweger 1997:19, 20).

Just 2 years later, in 1908, Pentecostalism was brought to South Africa, from America, under the ministry of John G. Lake. Within 4 years, he had established the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Zion Christian church (Synan 2006:535). The latter is a church characterised by syncretism between Pentecostal doctrines and traditional African religious views.

Synan (2006) explains as follows:

Basically, Pentecostals believe that the experience of the 120 on the day of Pentecost, known as the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit', should be normative for all Christians. Most Pentecostals believe, furthermore, that the first sign or 'initial evidence' of this second baptism is speaking in a language unknown to the speaker. (p. 531)

With reference to Grenz, Archer and Hamilton (2010) give the following ‘typical’ definition of Pentecostalism:

Pentecostalism as a movement began in the early twentieth century and emphasises a post-conversion experience called the baptism in the Holy Spirit which is for all believers. Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) is affirmed as the initial evidence of such a baptism. (p. 191)

Pentecostalism rejects paedobaptism on the same grounds as the Anabaptists of the 16th century. This includes a specific view of the covenant, exegesis of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16, a specific view on the relationship between the Old and New Testament, et cetera.

From the perspective of the Reformed tradition, the same arguments in favour of infant baptism are still applicable, as they were in the 16th century. Infant baptism is founded on the doctrine of the covenant of grace (Potgieter 2008:595). The covenant of grace is still the same since it has been instituted by God in Genesis 17. Under the old dispensation, the sign and seal of the promises and commands of the covenant was circumcision, and now it is baptism. ‘One cannot reject infant baptism without denying the connection between circumcision and baptism ...’ (Van Genderen & Velema 2008:797–798). The Reformed view thus also rests firmly on the unity of the Old and New Testaments.

As far as baptism is concerned, Van Genderen and Velema (2008:799) come to the following conclusion, ‘[a]mong Anabaptists, Baptists and Pentecostals, baptism is more a sign and seal of man’s faith than of God’s promise.’

Closely linked to the doctrine on baptism is the doctrine on original sin. In the section on the doctrinal views of the Anabaptists above, it was pointed out that they reject the Reformed view on original sin. We find a very recent illustration of the rejection of this doctrine from a Pentecostal point of view in a thesis for which a doctoral degree was conferred by the North-West University (Kotze 2016). According to Kotze (2016:53), Augustine ‘saturated’ the church with a concept from Manichaeism, now known as original sin. He (Kotze 2016:55) continues by stating that Augustine’s error was then further promulgated by Luther, Calvin and their followers. Kotze fails to mention that Calvin, in the chapter of the *Institutes* on original sin, categorically rejects the doctrine of the Manichees and calls it ‘the absurd notion’ (*stultum Manichaeorum nugamentum*, CO II:185) of the Manichees (*Inst.* 2.1.11). Kotze also fails completely to evaluate through scientific exegesis the Reformed doctrine on sin as founded on Scripture.

The Reformed doctrine on original sin is founded or based on texts like Job 14:4, Psalm 51:7 and Romans 5:12–21. According to Horton (2011:423), ‘[n]o doctrine is more crucial to our anthropology and soteriology’. It is also clearly confessed in, among

others, the Reformed creeds, the Belgic Confession (Article 15), the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 3). In Lord's Day 3, the question is asked (Beeke 1999:29), 'whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?' With reference to Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12, 18, 19; Genesis 6:5; Job 14:4; 15:14, 16; John 3:5; Ephesians 2:5, et cetera, the answer is 'from the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin' (Beeke 1999:29).

The debate between Calvinism and the posterity of the Anabaptists is also highly relevant as far as the doctrine on free will and predestination is concerned. Kotze (2016) attempts to develop or formulate a Pentecostal doctrine of election over and against the doctrine of election in Calvinism and Arminianism. Although Bergsma Friesen (1973:125) comes to the conclusion that there is little room for 'rapprochement' between the two groups on the question of predestination and free will, she still pleads for the debate to continue.

However, it is especially concerning the doctrine of Scripture and the use of Scripture (hermeneutics) that the relevance of the debate must be emphasised. The statement has already been made above regarding the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists, namely that every doctrine could be traced back to radical different views on the interpretation of Scripture. This is even truer today.

From a Reformed perspective, hermeneutics is the theological science that determines the principles for interpreting Scripture from Scripture itself. In this regard, Reymond (1998) mentions three implications that Scripture's own doctrine of Scripture has for biblical hermeneutics: 'First, the Scripture's doctrine of Scripture, espousing its own revelatory and inspired character, binds us to the grammatical/historical method of exegesis' (Reymond 1998:49). 'Second, the Scripture's doctrine of Scripture commits us to the harmonisation of Scripture' (Reymond 1998:49). The third implication is as follows (Reymond 1998):

[D]espite the 'occasional' or ad hoc character of its literary parts, the Scripture's doctrine of Scripture binds us to view its teachings as timeless truths, intended 'for our instruction, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness'. (p. 52)

Jordaan (1991:30), in agreement with Calvin and other reformed scholars, puts emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit as the actual interpreter of Scripture in order to come to a sound interpretation.

Pentecostal hermeneutics differs in principle from the Reformed doctrine. Kotze (2016:191) mentions the fact that Pentecostalism is still relatively young in comparison with other more established theologies and then continues to say (Kotze 2016):

The fact that Pentecostals 'live out' their theology, rather than referring to ancient creeds, lends to it a much different character than that of a more structured theology such as

Calvinism ... Pentecostals use their experience in the light of Scripture, to define their theology. Pentecostal theology, because it is a 'living theology' must correspond with Scripture and make sense of everyday experiences. (p. 192)

Kotze (2016) also comes to the following acknowledgement:

The interpretation of Scripture from a Pentecostal perspective has to align with the experience of the presence of God, prophecy, interpretation of tongues, dreams, visions and spiritual perceptions. It cannot simply be a clinical literal translation of the Bible, without the possibility to apply that Scripture in daily circumstances. (p. 194)

This Pentecostal viewpoint must inevitably lead to a separation between Word and Spirit and a devaluation of Scripture, similar to the viewpoint of the radicals in the 16th century.

A well-known South African Pentecostal theologian, Marius Nel (2015), describes the three main elements of Pentecostal hermeneutics as follows:

The interrelationship between the *Holy Spirit* as the One animating *Scriptures* and empowering the *believing community* with the purpose that members be equipped for ministry and bearing witness in culturally appropriate ways. (p. 6)

Just as Kotze, Nel (2015:16) also emphasises the experience of believers when he concludes, '[f]or them, the experience of an encounter with God through his Spirit is imperative, and interpretation of the information contained in the Bible is determined by their praxis'. In another article, Nel (2014) makes the following statement:

Magisterial Protestantism [*Calvinism?*] tends to read the Bible through the lens of Pauline theology while Pentecostalism reads the rest of the New Testament through Lukan eyes, especially with the lenses provided by the book of Acts. (p. 294)

According to Nel (2014:295), the turn from Paul to Luke represents a shift in *genres*, from didactic to narrative literature. He calls Pentecostal hermeneutics 'subjectivising hermeneutic' with the insistence that the drama of salvation history is to be re-enacted in each believer's life (Nel 2014:295).<sup>52</sup> The statements of Nel thus confirm the radical difference in the use of Scripture between Calvinism and Pentecostalism.

Anderson (2004:225–242) deals extensively with the Pentecostal way of reading the Bible, and says the following (Anderson 2004):

[M]ost Pentecostals rely on an experiential rather than a literal understanding of the Bible and it is therefore not very meaningful to discuss the interpretation of the text alone. Pentecostals believe in spiritual illumination, the experiential immediacy of the Holy Spirit who makes the

.....  
52. Hollenweger [1997:307–325] also deals with the issue of Pentecostal hermeneutics and comes to a somewhat strange conclusion: 'No one person interprets Scripture correctly on his own. It is only in conflict, debate, and agreement with the whole people of God, and also with non-Christian readers, that we can get a glimpse of what Scripture means.'

Bible 'alive' and therefore different from any other book. They assign multiple meanings to the biblical text, preachers often assigning it 'deeper significance' that can only be perceived by the help of the Spirit. (p. 226)

Anderson (2004:228) continues to point out that the strength of Pentecostal hermeneutics lies in the serious role given to both the biblical text and the human experience. She adds the following (Anderson 2004):

Pentecostals use the Bible to explain the central emphasis on the experience of the working of the Spirit with 'gifts of the Spirit', especially healing, exorcism, speaking in tongues and prophesying. (p. 228)

Maris (1992:195–203) also deals with the hermeneutics of Pentecostalism and clearly points out that the baptism with the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit as seen by Pentecostalism are typical of their hermeneutics. He (Maris 1992:203) further mentions some fundamental differences, namely the emphasis on experience, the emphasis on the book of Acts and the possibility of extra-biblical revelation as far as Pentecostalism is concerned.

## ■ Challenges for Calvinism today

In my view, it is undoubtedly clear that the debate between Calvinism and the posterity of 16th-century Anabaptism is more relevant than ever. As far as this debate is concerned, Reformed theology (Calvinism) is facing certain challenges of which only a few are mentioned.

In the first place, there is the challenge to maintain the Reformed confessions as living confessions of the church today. In this regard, Van den Belt (2015:51–53) clearly points out that the debate with the Anabaptists played a definite role in the formulation of certain parts of the Heidelberg Catechism. The debate with the Anabaptists also forms the direct background for the Belgic Confession. Hofmeyer and Van Niekerk (1987:2) state categorically that the most important problem underlying the Belgic Confession is the Anabaptist viewpoints (cf. also Verboom 1999:21–25). The direct background for the formulation of the Canons of Dordt also reflects the conflict with the Arminians, which is very closely related (and in some aspects even synonymous with) to Pentecostalism. According to Walker et al. (1997:457, 491) at least two other reformed confessions, namely the Augsburg Confession (Melancthon) and the Forty-Two Articles of John Knox, must also be read against the background of the conflict with the Anabaptists.

In order to face the challenge of the current debate between Calvinism and Anabaptism (Pentecostalism), a living knowledge of the Reformed heritage as formulated in the confessions is of utmost importance. The confessions form part of the very essence of the



church. After more than four centuries, they are still relevant because they are in accordance with Scripture. They are part of the essential armour of the church against the onslaught of heresy.

Another challenge that is prevalent is the fact of facing the threat of Neo-Pentecostalism, that is, the infiltration of Pentecostalism into mainline Reformed churches. In this regard, Coetzee (1986:227) highlighted the influence of a theologian of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr Andrew Murray, on the development of Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism after Murray himself had been fundamentally influenced by Wesleyan Methodism, the Keswick Conferences, et cetera. Clark<sup>53</sup> (2001:334) confirms that 30 years ‘before the first pentecostal meetings were held in South Africa, Andrew Murray was writing books on these topics that were to serve as manuals for the indigenous pentecostal movement.’ There is a growing tendency to neglect the fundamental differences underlying Calvinism and Anabaptism in its current manifestation.<sup>54</sup>

## ■ Conclusion

The 500th commemoration of the 16th-century Reformation is a reason for real joy, gratitude and praise to God. Churches in the Reformed tradition and the Reformed theology are blessed with the richest heritage. This heritage must be valued and preserved by facing the challenges and onslaught from heretical viewpoints through promoting sound Reformed theology and church practice to the glory of God and towards the coming of his kingdom.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 5

The year 2017 is the year of the 500th commemoration of the 16th-century Reformation. This chapter focuses on a specific aspect of the Reformation, namely the debate between Calvin and the Anabaptists. Calvin had to defend the truth of Scripture just as strongly against the heresy of Anabaptism as he did against the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. A short overview of the debate reveals fundamental differences

53. Matthew Clark has been an ordained pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission of SA since 1973. He also lectured at the AFM Theological College in Auckland Park, Johannesburg.

54. A clear illustration of this tendency is the institution of a chair in Ecumenism, Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism at the Faculty of Theology of the North-West University, a faculty with a very clearly formulated Reformed vision and mission. The institution of this chair is motivated by the argument that it creates the opportunity for dialogue between two theologies that both accept the authority of Scripture. This statement is not an unqualified truth as was clearly pointed out in the section above on hermeneutics and the use of Scripture.

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between Calvin and the Anabaptists, inter alia on the doctrines of baptism, original sin, free will and predestination, view on the Scripture, hermeneutics, the relationship between Word and Spirit, and then finally, the relationship between the Old and New Testament. These differences are also reflected in the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th century. After 500 years, this debate between Calvinism and the posterity of 16th-century Anabaptism, namely Pentecostalism, is more relevant than ever, especially as far as the following doctrines are concerned, namely baptism, original sin, free will and predestination and the view on and use of Scripture. The fundamental differences are clearly illustrated by way of some examples in the South African context. The debate poses certain challenges to Reformed theology and churches in the Reformed tradition, among others in maintaining the Reformed confessions and facing the threat of Neo-Pentecostalism.

# The shadows of 1516: Understanding the 500 years that followed (starring Bosch, Luther, Erasmus and More)

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## ■ Historical context of AD 1516

We write Anno Domini 1516. Contrary to common perception, this does not refer to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem but to his incarnation. For instance, one finds this emphasis in a consistent way throughout Bede's *Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, 'in the year of

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the Incarnation of our Lord<sup>55</sup> (Bede 1994). Before Pope Gregory introduced the present calendar system to the Roman Catholic countries of Europe in October 1582, the Christian calendar was based on the incarnation of Christ (Richards 2008). Many countries practiced an annunciation year with the year starting in March and Christmas following 9 months later. For the church, the incarnation, God's Son coming to earth and taking on a human body, was the main event. The incarnation was God's actual intervention in history while Christ's subsequent birth in Bethlehem was only something that followed logically. The *Logos* through whom God had created all things originally became man to redeem a fallen creation, to recreate fallen mankind. This was the church's great message of regeneration by God's Word and Spirit. God spoke and the Word created, as it was in the beginning. People of 1516 in Christian Europe grew up with this perspective on history.

Anno Domini 1516 was also a year of comparative peace. Several bloody wars ended, and nations settled their differences. It was the year of the peace of Brussels where France and the Holy Roman Empire (of largely Germanic states) laid down their arms. Europe also welcomed the peace of Noyon where France and Spain agreed on their respective claims to Milan and Naples in present-day Italy. However, the tensions remained, and the incompatible interests of the main European dynasties, like the house of Habsburg and Valois, provided the material for several wars to come. By AD 1516, after the Hundred Year's War (Green 2015), the War of the Roses and a series of Italian conflicts, Christians in Europe were thoroughly used to a 'brotherhood' of Western Catholicism where it was considered an acceptable if not unavoidable phenomenon that Christians killed one another for material interests. One chronicler complained about the Christian rulers (Janin & Carlson 2013):

They subjected and despoiled the peasants and the men of the villages. In no wise did they defend their country from its enemies; rather did they trample it underfoot, robbing and pillaging the peasants' goods. (p. 113)

With brothers like these, who needs enemies?

That the life of someone considered out of line with the Roman Catholic establishment was worth considerably less is evidenced by, for instance, the Hussite Wars (Windrow 2004). That 1516 saw the birth of a baby girl from the Tudor Dynasty who would one day espouse the hyper-catholic Phillip II and become known as 'bloody Mary' was a prelude of things to come. Violence and religion seemed to agree well with each other during this time in history. Even spiritual leaders, bishops first among them, took up the sword. Pope Julius II, who died in 1513, was '*il papa terribile*' [the terrible pope] but otherwise known as the 'warrior pope' for good reason (Shaw 1996).

In contrast, the decades before 1516 had been years of recovery, both for Europe's population and its economy. New methods in mining provided a boom that would enable several German states to found their own university. Luther's father also made his fortune

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55. *Anno incarnationis dominicae*.

from this industry, enabling him to give his son a good education (Heinze 2006:30–32). Learning was further stimulated by the invention of the printing press. This started an acceleration in the spread and availability of information that is unique in history, only to be surpassed by the digital revolution. Only 20 years after Columbus, this was the age of exploration new horizons as the new world in the Americas was opening up. Society also showed an increasing appreciation for standardised values. For instance, it saw the introduction of laws for commercial beer brewing with the Bavarian *‘Reinheitsgebot’* (23 April 1516), a standard that is still used by many breweries today.

The Papal States were rich and powerful but essentially insecure. The political situation remained volatile after 1516, and within one decade, it was not the Protestants who sacked Rome but Catholic Emperor Charles V while the pope fled for his life (Tuchman 2014:127–136). Also, in Latin Europe, the attitude towards the papacy was less than congenial. In the background, the French threat of a renewed schism continued to linger. In 1513, warrior pope Julius was succeeded by Giovanni de Medici (Leo X) from yet another Italian family that was obsessed with financial and political power (King 2003:212–213). Because the Church was part of the family business, favours were passed on to relatives at a young age. When he was 11, Leo received the abbey of Monte Casino, and at 13, he became the youngest cardinal ever. His coronation as pope marked the changing times. It took place in front of St Peter’s church as there was no longer an inside. The ancient basilica of St Peter and St Paul’s, which had stood for 1200 years, had been pulled down by Julius since 1506, and the new edifice would only be completed on 18 November 1626. The historical link with early Christianity was lost in a visible way. Instead, Western Catholicism was introduced to four centuries of Baroque Christianity, marked by extravagance in painting and grotesque statues.

Looking back on the papacy of Leo and his predecessors, Pope Adrian VI (1522–1523) would say, ‘[f]or many years, abominable things have taken place in the Chair of Peter, abuses in spiritual matters, transgressions of the Commandments, so that everything here has been wickedly perverted’ (De Rosa 1993:166).<sup>56</sup> Apart from the immorality, the simony and the nepotism of the Renaissance popes before Adrian VI (and several of the later popes), by AD 1516, St Peter’s was also sitting on an indulgence time bomb that had been ticking since the days of Chaucer (Wright 2011:500).<sup>57</sup>

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56. Adrian VI, *Instructio* [to Francesco Chieregati], ‘[s]eimus in hae Sancta Sede aliquot iam annis multa abominanda fuisse, abusos in spiritualibus, excessus in mandatis et omnia denique in perversum mutata [Verweij 2009:277].

57. The sale of indulgences was a medieval innovation [Schirmmacher 2014:26–30]. The hypocrisy and greed of the Church in this regard was recognised for at least two centuries before AD 1516. This is evidenced by G. Chaucer’s ‘Prologue to the Pardoner’s tale’ [*Canterbury Tales* c.1478] and the following ‘Pardoner’s tale’, a story of preaching one thing but pursuing another, hugely popular and widespread in the late Middle Ages [see Wright 2011:325–327; cf. 1 Tm 6].

Christian or Western civilisation was not only under threat from the inside. Islam was on the rise. After the fall of Constantinople (1453), the Ottoman Empire had progressed through the Balkans, swallowing current Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania. An onslaught on Italy was narrowly halted. From 1520, the Turkish zeal for conquest would be renewed under Suleiman the Magnificent, and by 1526, the soldiers for Islam stood at the gates of Vienna (Nicolle 2010).

To shed light on the importance of AD 1516 in this historical context, this chapter focuses on four persons and events in their lives that were destined to shape the 500 years that followed: Hieronymus Bosch, Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More.

## ■ Bosch: Society and church on their way to hell

Anno Domini 1516 was a year of important persons and significant events. Spiritual and philosophical developments in societies are often first recognised by and reflected in the visual arts (Schaeffer 1990:27–34). Hieronymus Bosch lived in the Netherlands and was one of the most important painters of the period. He would die in August 1516 but not before he completed what should be regarded as his most important spiritual painting, *De Hooiwagen* ([The Haywain], 1516, Museo del Prado, Madrid).

Severe criticism against the church and Christian rulers is at least as old as Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Inferno* (early 14th century) where popes and princes suffered the Almighty's judgements alike. Dante's everlasting hell includes priests, popes and cardinals. The mortal sin of greed was one of the tickets that brought them there ('*avaritia*', see *Inferno*, Canto VII, line 47). Dante specifically denounced Boniface VIII and Pope Clement V (Canto XIX) for their simony, for buying their way into church offices. One should surmise that Dante would not have looked kindly on the most expensive conclave of them all, in 1503, when Julius II bought himself the papal crown with millions of dollars in today's money. Bosch lived to see that day. It sheds light on Pope Julius' personality that he subsequently decreed that anyone who henceforward bribed a conclave should be deposed (De Rosa 1993:153). If the laws and commandments did apply to those in power, they applied very differently to Julius II. Those around him were led by example. Consequently, nepotism, simony and other vices continued to reign in the church under his successors, not in the least at the court of Leo X, who was pope during the last three years of Bosch's life.

Hieronymus Bosch's earlier work had reflected a mildly critical spirit, namely to improve godly life and integrity in church and society alike. Most of his commissions had a religious nature and his patrons, churches among them, clearly did not mind that Bosch addressed the hypocrisy of Christians and pointed to God's standards and ultimate judgement in his paintings. The symbolism applied in his work was profoundly Christian (Zuiddam 2014:1–17).

Medieval Christianity grew up with an awareness of the seven mortal sins (Vost 2015:6–7), namely *superbia* [arrogance], *avaritia* [need], *luxuria* [extravagance and lust], *invidia* [envy], *gula* [gluttony], *ira* [wrath] and *acedia* [slothfulness, from the Greek ἀκηδία]. The *Seven deadly Sins and the four last Things* is a painting (oil on wood, Museo del Prado, Madrid) that has traditionally been attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, completed around 1500 or later. Four small circles, portraying the four last things (death, judgement, hell and glory) are set around a larger circle which depicts the seven deadly sins. These circle around the Latin text, which reads ‘*cave, cave, deus videt*’ [beware, beware, God is watching]. Quotations from Deuteronomy 32:28–29, about a nation void of counsel and without understanding, complement the picture.

While according to some, the *Seven deadly Sins* may be by the hand of a pupil rather than Bosch himself, it was by any means not the first time that he criticised the sins of the church. His reservations are already quite obvious in *Het Narrenschip* ([Ship of fools], Louvre Paris). This painting is dated 1594 or later because of the publication of Sebastian Brandt’s book *Narrenschiff* in that year. It shows a ship with clergy and laity embarked on an aimless journey, only concerned with enjoying themselves. From the top of the mast, symbolising the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the devil casts a satisfied glance. Things are going his way.

However, Bosch’s criticism almost turns into despair in his final work, the *Hooiwagen*. This triptych shows a Christian panorama of history, from the fall of mankind on its first panel to God’s judgement and the fires of hell on the third. The middle panel is perhaps the most disconcerting of the three. It portrays church and society in the present, that is, in the times of Bosch. This panel can also be argued to contain most if not all of the deadly sins (Snyder 2003:395–410). It shows cardinals, kings and near well everybody else being concerned with only one thing, namely chasing vanity and temporal benefits (Gibson 2010:39–46). Some do it with a show of dignity, others with a show of greed. Some travel on horseback, others on foot. The same is, however, true for all: They are chasing hay or straw. This is a symbol derived from Scripture as the apostle Paul (1 Cor 3 [KJV]) says:

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. (vv. 12–13)

Travelling on a road, this parade of people follows a huge cart with hay. Everyone wants some, even the nuns are gathering in their part. The road leads the wagon piled with straw and its followers to the third panel, that is, right into the fires of hell. This might be surprising at first glance but not for keen observers who by now will have noticed that a company of most gruesome demons is pulling the cart. Bosch’s message could not be more obvious: Church and society are on their way to hell.

The Dutch artist takes away any suggestion that the destination might be the temporal punishments of purgatory by including a selection of grotesque demons. This makes sense theologically. If society continues to chase hay and commits mortal sins for this

purpose, it can only end up in one place, namely hell itself. Whether you are a king, a cardinal or the pope himself, and whether you are committing these sins in a dignified or in an obvious way, the consequences are deadly for all alike. The *Hooiwagen* is Bosch's final testament to the Christian world of the Renaissance, a solemn warning to church and society in the year of his death, AD 1516.

Is there any hope left, according to Bosch? Not in the main painting. Even an angel is looking up to heaven and praying in despair. There is, however, hope when one closes the triptych. In a triptych, the back of the two side panels usually contains a fourth painting with two halves coming together as the panels close. This is also the case with the 'Haywain'. The exterior of the shutters together form a single scene depicting a *Marskramer* or 'wayfarer'. Despite distractions along the way, this pedlar sticks to the narrow road and continues his journey, using a stick to repel the occasional vicious dog (Ps 59:6; Rv 22:15). The overall triptych and its outer panel seem to carry the Lord Jesus' imagery of the broad way that leads to destruction and the narrow way that leads to everlasting life with few who shall find it (Mt 7:14; Lk 13:24). Although the wayfarer is travelling a lonely road – all other people in the picture are off the road or otherwise engaged – Bosch seems to say that there is still hope for the individual. For those who are prepared and committed to travel this narrow way, there is hope on the road of pilgrimage. In this way, Bosch foreshadows Bunyan's *Pilgrims progress*.

## ■ Luther: Personal salvation

While Bosch was emphasising the individual's quest for salvation in a corrupt society, a German professor had embarked on a lecture series on the apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans. Martin Luther had started these classes around Easter 1515 for the European summer semester (Rm 1:1–3:4) and continued through the following winter semester (Rm 3:5–8:39), concluding the series in early September 1516 (Rm 9:1–16:27). Throughout his academic life, Luther would be devoted to biblical exegesis (Pauck 1961:xx). For the winter semester of 1516, he would continue his lectures with an exposition of the letter of St Paul to the Galatians. Both epistles stress the role of faith in salvation.

In Anno Domini 1516, while Luther was teaching on Romans and faith, he also took part in two disputations. The theses that he provided for the second dispute, on original sin and the need of grace to obey God's commandments,<sup>58</sup> signalled a significant influence of these Romans lectures on his theology. Luther became convinced that God's grace was bestowed by means of faith as only requirement (Hendrix 2015:50–52). Although much water has flowed through the Tiber since, in the theological climate of 1516, Luther's

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58. In 1516, Luther took part in a dispute on the role of grace and free will (*Questio de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia disputata*). Although his theses were technically prepared by one of his students, they reflected Luther's views (see Janz 2009, chap. 2.5 'The academic disputations of 1516 and 1517').



theses were a departure from the medieval scholastic theology that emphasised outward obedience to rules and inward rational conformity to concepts.

Although the realisation and commitment to Luther's new position dawned in 1516, building blocks were present at earlier stages. This is suggested by his earlier work on Peter Lombard's sentences and particularly also by Luther's early sermons where he consistently presented God's proper role as that of donor rather than acceptor of human righteousness (Kaufman 1982:282). From these sermons, it is also clear that, according to Luther, God bestowed grace out of free love and not in response to human merit. In these early documents, Christian salvation was not even initiated by moral effort. In many ways, Luther's view on salvation and faith was a process that matured and visibly came to fruition in 1516, but it was not completely absent before. This is true for much of his thinking, except for the last 5 years of his life, which, despite considerable exegesis of the OT, were otherwise overshadowed by a vulgarity of language and violence of expression in several notorious pamphlets. In several respects, these were not consistent with his earlier writings (Edwards 1984:125–140).

While Martin Luther was publicly committing himself to a position that claimed salvation for the individual on the basis of faith, the Reformation of 1517 was also in the making in other respects. One of Luther's students that year was Johannes Oldecop. He was initially a great admirer of the Reformer but would become a committed opponent in his later life. Oldecop's chronicle relates that, in June 1516, he heard a stirring sermon preached by Tetzel, the famous seller of indulgences, in the parish church of Wittenberg. He also mentions that Luther preached against indulgences in the local monastery church of the Augustinians in the evening of the same day (Lenhart 1958:83). This was in a relatively private setting among like-minded brothers, but eventually, Luther would go public with his doctrine of justification by faith alone as well as with his opposition against the church teachings of purgatory and indulgences which denied this. For many of the 95 theses of 1517, the seeds had been sown by 1516.

With two lecture series and a public dissertation which all emphasised the role of faith and grace in justification, plus privately sermonising against indulgences, Luther was firmly predisposed towards the doctrine of *sola fide* [justification by faith alone]. In hindsight, Luther's personal recollection was of course somewhat different. He emphasised that, although he knew some of these things in theory already, this only became a life-changing reality for him 3 years later, in the year of Tetzel's passing (July 1519). This puts the date for Luther's seeing the light, in his own view, 2 years after the posting of the 95 theses when he was working his way through the Psalms with the lecture series on Paul's letters in mind. He writes about this in 1545 in the preface to his collected works in Latin (Luther 1960):

But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart, but a single word in [*Romans*] Chapter 1, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed,' that had stood in my way. For I hated that word 'righteousness of God,' which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had

been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they call it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner. Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, 'As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the Decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!' Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted. At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me. (pp. 336–337)

Luther mentions that, at a later stage, he also read Augustine's book *The Spirit and the letter*<sup>59</sup> where Augustine interprets God's righteousness in a similar way as a righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Luther would not be Luther if he did not add (Luther 1960):

Although this was heretofore said imperfectly and he did not explain all things concerning imputation clearly, it nevertheless was pleasing that God's righteousness with which we are justified was taught. (p. 337)

Whatever the exact timeframe of Luther's convictions, it is clear that AD 1516 is extremely important as a formative year for his views and that all ingredients were already in place. Faith and grace should be able to deliver from a corrupt commonwealth. Like Hieronymus Bosch and his triptych, the road to salvation for Martin Luther is an individual one.

## ■ Erasmus: Change through the Word of God

When Luther was working his way through Romans, and had arrived at Chapter 9 (on the Jews and predestination), a special book arrived in Wittenberg. It was published in March 1516 in great haste to beat other printers and without thorough preparation (Metzger 1987:153). Despite this, it would deeply influence Western Christianity and

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59. *De Spiritu et Littera*, based on 2 Corinthians 3:6.

became one of the most important books ever published, namely Erasmus's *Greek New Testament*. Luther would use it as he continued with his Romans series and the revised 1519 edition of Erasmus' NT would serve as the basis for Luther's translation of the Bible into German. He often consulted Erasmus's Latin translation from the Greek for this purpose (Whitford 2008:35).

In the world of the time, Bosch, Luther and Erasmus were all considered 'Deutsch' (German) as Dutch (Erasmus' home language) is a Germanic language, and all three of them were born within the jurisdiction of the Holy Roman Empire (Bejczy 1997:388). It is significant that Erasmus, like the only Dutch pope, Adrian, was educated at the Latin School in Deventer, the Netherlands. Not only was Deventer probably the most important northern city in the Low Countries of the 15th century, but towards the end of Erasmus' career as a student, the school was also uniquely equipped with Greek as a subject. At the time, Greek was rarely taught at universities and not at all in grammar schools. This early exposure to Greek, albeit limited, gave Erasmus an advantage over fellow scholars despite his later claims that formal education did not do much for him (Minnich & Meissner 1978:603–604).

By 1516, Erasmus was already a famous author. One of his most popular books was *Enchiridion* (Erasmus 1501), hardly known today, a devotional appeal on Christians to act in accordance with the Christian faith rather than merely performing the necessary rites. More lasting fame and notoriety Erasmus would receive as author of *In praise of folly* (*Lof der Zotheid*, *Moriae Encomium, sive Stultitiae Laus* 1509/11), a critique of Church and society alike. Significantly, it was written just after turning down an important position at the papal court. Erasmus criticised the church as an unspiritual, hypocritical, commercial and political affair. This book was banned in Leuven, Cambridge and Oxford the next year. France not only burned the book but also its translator. Because of Erasmus' standing with the Roman court, however, *In praise of folly* only appeared on the papal index in 1559 after his death (Sova 2006:269–270).

In 1514, Erasmus evaluated the pontificate of Julius II (warrior pope) in *Julius excluded from Heaven* (Latin: *Iulius exclusus e coelis*), a pamphlet which fully lives up to its title. On being denied entrance to heaven, the pope applies secular tactics to persuade St Peter but fails. *Julius excluded* appeared anonymously, but Erasmus always found it difficult to positively deny that he wrote it. Correspondence from 1516, however, makes clear that Erasmus was indeed its author. Thomas More affirms this in a letter to Erasmus (15 December 1516). He still had several manuscripts in his possession, 'entirely in your own handwriting', including a copy of the dialogue between Julius and St Peter. In his letter, More asks Erasmus what to do with it (Marius 1986:241).

His NT of that same year was as much about the Latin translation as about making available the Greek original (De Jonge 1984:413). The publication of the Greek with a translation in a language that all scholars understood led to a common awareness that

the original language of the Church of Rome was Greek. Latin was not the eternal language of the Bible but a translation of God's Word into the vernacular of the Romans. Although the Bible had already been translated in most European languages by AD 1516, these translations were based on the Latin Vulgate. Erasmus' publication of the NT in Greek functioned as a seal of approval on translations from the original into contemporary languages. Although Latin was still the lingua franca of Western civilisation and the language of the church, it lost some of its inflated status with people becoming more aware that the apostolic faith was originally revealed in the Greek language.

Apart from increasing this awareness, the Greek NT of 1516 also criticised the text and translation of the Vulgate.<sup>60</sup> With his Latin translation from the Greek, Erasmus showed that corruptions had slipped into the Vulgate. Interestingly, one of the places where this showed was Romans 5:1, on Luther's important subject of justification by faith. Both the Greek and Erasmus have an indicative, namely 'since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God' and therefore treat justification as the basis for assurance (Jarrott 1970:128–130). Against the received Greek text, the Vulgate had expelled the role of faith in justification. Instead of treating justification as the basis for peace with God, the Vulgate insisted, '*justificati igitur ex fide, pacem habeamus ad deum*' (subjunctive, 'let us have peace with God'). Although there is a limited number of Greek manuscripts that support this reading, this was not known at the time, and some of the manuscripts that do support the reading are heavily annotated.

Interestingly, in the 21st century, it became apparent that the old battle concerning Romans 5:1 still rages. With a majority vote, the United Bible Societies admitted that their usual group of favoured manuscripts lacked internal evidence and that the indicative reading (ἐχομεν) of the Byzantine tradition should be preferred (Metzger 1975:511), a decision that still stands in their present edition (*Greek New Testament*, 5th edn.) and Nestle Aland's critical edition (*Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th edn.).

Although Erasmus and Luther would never see eye to eye personally, they agreed on the necessity of justification by means of faith. Particularly since 1522, Erasmus has visibly accommodated this perspective in his thinking (Kleinhans 1970:469).

Because of Erasmus' translation of the Greek and his annotations, the world of 1516 realised that the Latin Bible of the church was not infallible. This thought left many uncomfortable. The Greek manuscripts that Erasmus used largely reflected the text of the Greek Church and are otherwise referred to as Byzantine. These would form the basis of

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60. The Greek text of the NT of 1516 was accompanied by notes to explain grammatical peculiarities in the text, which seemed to be inferior or incorrect from the perspective of classical Greek. Theodor Beza would defend the character of biblical Greek in his *Annotationes* (Louw 1990:159).

great Bible translations that would last for many centuries like Luther's German Bible, the King James Version (KJV) and the monumental Dutch *Statenvertaling*.

Erasmus made it clear that he wished to promote the study of Scripture at all levels of Church and society. To this end, he wrote an *Exhortation* or *Paraclesis* (Olin 1987:97–108), which was prefaced to his 1516 edition of the NT. In this book, Erasmus writes (Olin 1987):

Indeed, I disagree very much with those who are unwilling that Holy Scripture, translated into the vulgar tongue, be read by the uneducated, as if Christ taught such intricate doctrines that they could scarcely be understood by very few theologians, or as if the strength of the Christian religion consisted in men's ignorance of it. The mysteries of kings, perhaps, are better concealed, but Christ wishes His mysteries published as openly as possible. I would that even the lowliest women read the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. And I would that they were translated into all languages so that they could be read and understood not only by Scots and Irish but also by Turks and Saracens. (p. 101)

Erasmus wanted a society where life is permeated with the knowledge of God so that lives are transformed by Scripture (Olin 1987):

Would that, as a result, the farmer sing some portion of them at the plow, the weaver hum some parts of them to the movement of his shuttle, the traveller lighten the weariness of the journey with stories of this kind! Let all the conversations of every Christian be drawn from this source. For in general our daily conversations reveal what we are. (p. 101)

Erasmus confronted the society of his day with the source of Christian civilisation, intending to take them back to the Word of God and its original meaning. He sensed a discrepancy between God's message and what Western church had made of it. By promoting the availability of the Bible to everyone, Erasmus joined the message of Bosch and Luther that religious reform in a corrupt society starts with the individual in response to the gospel. It is the ploughman and the weaver who will have to start reading the Scriptures for themselves and memorise their contents. As people become more familiar with the contents of Holy Writ and value God's Word, their lives, words and actions should change for the better.

## ■ More: Salvation by government?

Anno Domini 1516 saw the publication of another book with lasting influence, namely *Utopia* by Thomas More. He was not 'Sir Thomas' as yet, and it would be another 13 years before he became Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII. By 1516, More was still busy carving out a career in court diplomacy and law while he also represented the district of London in Parliament, which was primarily an advisory body to the King.

More was not so much concerned with God's standards as with the lack of order and equity in the world of 1516. His solution was one of reform in government. For this, he

used an imaginary island with natives and their utopian society to show that even a pagan might see the corruption of Christian society in 16th-century Europe (Marius 1986:188). Its main theme is equity and care for all in a society marked by the rule of law. *Utopia* is derived from the Greek, and although some also read it as a 'good place' (Εὐτοπία), Thomas More meant that it was a place that does not exist (οὐ-τόπος). In his personal letters (in Latin), he refers to it as 'Nusquam', which can only mean 'No Place'.

The careful reader of *Utopia* soon finds out that More looks toward the state for the solution of the manifold problems in 16th-century Europe. Importantly, his paradise island has a state-sanctioned priesthood that includes all religions and works together with the government on many issues. Quite shocking for 1516, the state has a final say in matters that were exclusively in the province of individuals, their families or the church, like marriage and divorce (More 2012):

But it frequently falls out that when a married couple do not well agree, they, by mutual consent, separate, and find out other persons with whom they hope they may live more happily; yet this is not done without obtaining leave of the Senate, which never admits of a divorce but upon a strict inquiry made, both by the senators and their wives, into the grounds upon which it is desired, and even when they are satisfied concerning the reasons of it they go on but slowly, for they imagine that too great easiness in granting leave for new marriages would very much shake the kindness of married people. (p. 144)

The non-Christian society of *Utopia* embraced many different religions (More 2012:166) and displayed not only tolerance but even the cooperation of state and non-Christian religions, which may have been fine for the pre-Christian Roman Empire that More idolised but would have been repulsive to the average 16th-century Catholic (cf. Kessler 2002:207–229). Even the older More distanced himself from *Utopia*, '[t]here has been a puzzling disparity between More's seeming advocacy of religious toleration in *Utopia* and his later actions and writings against heresy in England' (Witt Caudle 1970:167). *Utopia*'s married priesthood and particularly its incorporation of women priests would have been nearly as problematic (More 2012:177). More may have intended it as a joke, but ease of divorce and recommendation of euthanasia as a common practice supervised by the state would turn out to be no laughing matter 500 years down the track. When Utopian citizens were terminally ill, and there was no hope left, More had them visited by a priest and the local major to convince them that euthanasia was the best solution for their circumstances (More 2012):

I have already told you with what care they look after their sick, so that nothing is left undone that can contribute either to their ease or health; and for those who are taken with fixed and incurable diseases, they use all possible ways to cherish them and to make their lives as comfortable as possible. They visit them often and take great pains to make their time pass off easily; but when any is taken with a torturing and lingering pain, so that there is no hope either of recovery or ease, the priests and magistrates come and exhort them, that, since they are now

unable to go on with the business of life, are become a burden to themselves and to all about them, and they have really out-lived themselves, they should no longer nourish such a rooted distemper, but choose rather to die since they cannot live but in much misery; being assured that if they thus deliver themselves from torture, or are willing that others should do it, they shall be happy after death: since, by their acting thus, they lose none of the pleasures, but only the troubles of life, they think they behave not only reasonably but in a manner consistent with religion and piety; because they follow the advice given them by their priests, who are the expounders of the will of God. Such as are wrought on by these persuasions either starve themselves of their own accord, or take opium, and by that means die without pain. But no man is forced on this way of ending his life; and if they cannot be persuaded to it, this does not induce them to fail in their attendance and care of them: but as they believe that a voluntary death, when it is chosen upon such an authority, is very honorable, so if any man takes away his own life without the approbation of the priests and the senate, they give him none of the honors of a decent funeral, but throw his body into a ditch. (pp. 140–141)

It is pertinent to recognise that, in *Utopia*, assisted suicide for the terminally ill was regarded as commendable. Although the decision theoretically remained in the hands of the sick, the stress their illness placed on their loved ones and the combined authority of their priest and local major advising them to step out of life is not a context that allows the use of ‘voluntary’. A vulnerable, dying person would not feel at liberty to dissent. While Utopian society considered euthanasia commendable as such, it was ultimately the sanction of the authorities that made the deed right or wrong. In the end, it was the system of *Utopia* that (in)validated morals. The moral quality of deeds as such was not considered absolute. It was Utopia’s law and system of government that redeemed.

It is debatable whether More intended to recommend euthanasia for his times, but it should nonetheless be considered that *Utopia* has serious undertones at the very least. From More’s own reflective words in its final chapter, it is clear that he intended this book to be taken seriously at the time, ‘[t]here are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments’ (More 2012:190). ‘Nor did anyone who wrote prefaces of praise for the book let slip the thought that the utopian commonwealth was intended to be a bad place’ (Marius 1986:188). Consequently, it was bound to be taken seriously over the centuries, especially because *Utopia* addressed relevant and serious issues (Gordon 1997:77). It also helped to advance More’s career (De Silva 2000:2).

These things suggest that More was, for instance, at least open to the idea of religion and government working together, even to the extent of allowing more state jurisdiction in church and civil affairs, particularly on the issue of marriage and divorce. More had also profusely praised King Henry in *Utopia*, and in that light, it must have come as an unpleasant surprise when More as Lord Chancellor denied his public support to the king’s remarrying,



an aspect that is often overlooked in debates on More's career (e.g. Warner 1996:59–72). In a twist of fate, the king, who was proclaimed *Fidei Defensor* by Pope Leo X, ended up excommunicated, and the man who furthered his personal career by *Utopia* was declared a saint by another Pope Leo (XIII, 19 May 1935).

It is noteworthy that Erasmus helped to publish *Utopia* out of friendship but carefully refrained from any public endorsement. Although he thought *Utopia* was funny and worth passing on to his friends, Erasmus' serious hopes for the desperate state of Western civilisation in AD 1516 were based elsewhere. His vision was for a society that moved beyond natural law and was genuinely transformed by the Word of God. In contrast, More based his expectations on the force of politics and the law. His was a vision of revived classical civilisation.

Marius (1986) captures this very well, when he notes the following:

There was one profound difference between how Raphael [*the storyteller in More's book*] announced Christianity to the Utopians and how the early fathers had interpreted Christianity to the Roman Empire. To the fathers, the indispensable text was scripture, but Raphael and his band took no Bible with them to Utopia. The omission is startling and not accidental. More knew the Bible well, and Raphael carried with him such a load of Greek books that the Utopians, soon mastering Greek, rapidly began to absorb the best of classical wisdom. But he did not have room in his trunk for a Bible. (p. 178)

While Erasmus' hopes were founded on God and his revelation to all people, Thomas More, in AD 1516, envisaged change through a different system of government and by means of social engineering, including a compulsory formal education by a state priesthood (Marius 1986):

More's description of the priests of Utopia reflects both dissatisfaction with the corruption of the Christian priests and yet an utter dedication to priesthood itself. In this respect, he is again different from Erasmus, who praised priests only when he had to. (p. 184)

For Bosch, Luther and Erasmus, the vehicle for change was profoundly personal. It was through individual exposure to divine revelation and personal obedience to the Word of Christ that reformation was to be expected. In *Utopia*, personal accountability to the one true God does not function at all. More's solution is a corporate one. He had his reasons. In the disillusionment of 1516, the corruption of church, state and society in general may have seemed simply too great. Reformation of individuals was fine, but unless the system was changed into something more equitable, nothing would come of it. Individuals had time to change and respond to the Word of God for centuries, but look at where this had brought Western civilisation. It just was not happening. If we just had more natural law and equity, Europe should be a better place. If even the pagans in *Utopia* are able to create such society, then the Christians of the Renaissance should certainly think twice about their present condition.



## ■ Retrospect: Shadows then and now

Five hundred years after AD 1516, many of the same challenges remain. While Islam was approaching the gates of Western civilisation at the time, presently it is on the doorstep of every major European city. As the people of 1516 were living through an age of unprecedented information acceleration, the digital revolution and the internet have completely changed the world of the present.

The voices of Bosch, Luther and Erasmus with their call for personal obedience to divine revelation seem as absent as they were in More's model island state. *Utopia* with its rule of law, its state-sanctioned, non-radical religions and its public hospitals has finally arrived. What began as a dream or a jest is now a nightmare for many as the West has taken an utopian descent into a multireligious secular society that goes beyond More's wildest dreams and regrets.

When the medieval Church lost its credibility, there was at least the standard of Scripture to which all authorities were held accountable. After the Enlightenment, its political changes and the 'Satanic mills' of the Industrial Revolution, the darkness of Nietzsche spread over a defenceless continent. The Western spirit could no longer resist as it had lost its former concepts and practice of faith, truth and charity as well as revelation and divine authority.

The priests of Utopia Nova preach an aggressive secularism. They are not only elected by the people, they engineer the views of the people and use the approval of the public system as fundamental for their man-made religion. What the powers that be decided today might be altogether different tomorrow.

Still, there might be individuals who heed the message of Bosch, Luther and Erasmus, who, despite the confusion of the times and the disillusionment with church and state alike, turn to Word and Spirit as the ancient transforming powers of Western civilisation.

This latter notion is important as otherwise an imbalance in favour of inner spirituality might be suggested. This perceived disparity is largely due to the dominating world views and their pressure on 21st-century observers in a context of liberal democracy. In the 15th and 16th century, society valued life very differently and, among many other things, saw God as the common denominator for state and church.

All segments of society were considered to be under and accountable to the same God. Ultimately, Christ is king of all. When Bosch, Erasmus and Luther called for personal reformation, their plea was inspired by external spiritual accountability. More's *Utopia* lacks this perspective. His somewhat Machiavellian approach enforced views and practices from the top, religious and otherwise. With Bosch, Erasmus and Luther, reformation was of necessity inspired by God and his Word, beginning at the level of the individual, whatever her position, while society is subsequently changed by these personal beginnings. Consequently, theirs is not a withdrawal into individualistic experience but a

call to obedience to God's Word as mankind approaches Judgement Day. This applied to everyone in all stations of life, whether these be state, church or elsewhere.

It was precisely because of these ideals that Erasmus refuted Machiavelli's secularism and pagan principles of government in his *Institutio principis Christiani* [Education of a Christian prince], also written in 1516. Two years later, Luther addressed the political leadership of Germany with his *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* [To the Christian nobility of the German people]. *Soli Deo Gloria* and the primacy of God's revealed Word set the standards for these. On all mankind rested the responsibility to work what was pleasing in God's sight. The responsibility of kings and princes was considered even greater. As God related to people in real life and not to systems, true Reformation was also viewed from this relational perspective. Scripture was considered as the very voice of God, the Eucharist as means to partake in the redemption of Christ incarnate and to align oneself with his purposes.

It is for this very reason that Bosch was concerned with all of Creation, that his paintings showed panoramas of world history and a society on its way to hell, including the kings and cardinals. Indeed, this reflected a measure of disillusionment, but Bosch's pilgrim was a far cry from 21st-century expressions of Christianity that accept forms of government that bar God from public life and are happy to take on secular finance and business practices that were expressly forbidden by the medieval Church. Neither Luther nor Erasmus or Bosch would ever have been satisfied 'to do religion' in the private sphere.

It should also be considered that Bosch was not a lonely voice from an obscure art studio. His message was intended to be amplified in public places and was supported by wealthy patrons. Many of his paintings were produced for major churches. In 16th-century terms, these were the centres of the community where poor and rich, kings and cardinals gathered *coram Deo* to worship their Creator, to listen to his voice and to have communion with the Incarnate Word, aligning themselves with God's views and purposes. This combination of accountability and personal application to the incarnate Christ reflects a theocratic world view, not inspired by human force but by a profound awareness of living *anno incarnationis dominicae*.

Salvation does not come about by organisation but by regeneration. Reformation is integral to the redemptive process for a fallen world that was initiated by the incarnation of Christ with a view on a new heaven and a new earth, with equity and justice, not merely with saved souls. These are proven reminders of the purpose of the incarnation of our Lord: Anno Domini, whether 1516 or 2016.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 6

AD 1516 casts long shadows not only in preparation of the Protestant Reformation in the years after but also on the 500 years that followed. The context of 1516 was one of

historical, socio-political, demographic and economic factors. This included an unprecedented increase in the flow of information and the military advance of Islam. Four specific events in AD 1516 had either a profound effect on or signalled important developments in Western thinking, namely:

1. In the year of this death, painter Jerome Bosch produced the *Haywain*, a severe critique of the Church and society of his day. While these are basically portrayed as on their way to hell, there remains hope for the individual pilgrim.
2. This notion of individual salvation is also found in Martin Luther who was lecturing on Paul's epistle to the Romans at the time and consequently started to emphasise personal faith.
3. While Luther was working his way through Paul's letter, he received a copy of Erasmus' first edition of the NT in Greek, which promoted the study of Scripture like no other book at the time from the conviction that familiarity with the Word of God was required for a transformation of Church and society.
4. AD 1516 also saw the publication of Thomas More's book *Utopia*, which sought a corporate solution. The pagans of Utopia with their society based on reason and natural law were held up as example. In consultation with a multireligious priesthood, their state had the final authority in matters like marriage and divorce while euthanasia was made available for terminally ill citizens.

These four persons from the year 1516 reflect an awareness of a serious moral and spiritual crisis in the Christian West. Bosch, Luther and Erasmus were convinced that individuals could no longer rely on church or society for guidance but must take responsibility themselves, using the Word of God as compass. In More's wake, AD 1516 also foreshadows the development towards 'big government' with the state demanding power in areas that were not in its traditional sphere of influence. This unholy alliance between individualism and a government-centred society would eventually characterise the modern and postmodern West in the 500 years that followed 1516.

# Fire in the bosom: Luther’s liberty paradox ‘repeated forward’

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## ■ Introduction

The German Reformer Luther ‘revelled in paradox ... from the beginning to the end his theology of the Cross is a theology of paradox’ (Janz 1998:6).<sup>61</sup> The purpose of this inquiry is to probe the possibility of ‘repeating forward’, one of Luther’s most famous applications of paradox, namely his intriguing paradox of Christian liberty as an event of unmerited participation in Christ himself and in his free action, through the Holy Spirit. This freedom paradox is here investigated as ‘the great mystery in the life of a human being’ (Berkouwer 1957:364; [*emphasis in original*]) – in as far as it was powerfully and joyfully

61. Translations into English are from author’s own hand, unless otherwise indicated.

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rediscovered by Luther, largely repressed in modernity, reawakened in the work of a thinker like Dostoevsky and, finally, repeated anew in an eschatological, theodramatic mode, improvising by faith and through the Holy Spirit ‘the *freedom in Christ*, the freedom of (*already*) being God’s child as the true human being that God had meant us to be’, even though not yet in its fullness (Berkouwer 1957:376, [*author’s own emphasis*]).

This purpose statement necessitates some introductory remarks on the following matters. Firstly, I need to comment on the methodological notion of ‘repeating forward’ Luther’s understanding of freedom as an uncontrollable event of pure grace.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, I comment on the danger zone posed by ‘the fire in the bosom’, especially as it evokes a theology of ‘perhaps-happening’. Subsequently, the body of the chapter must first of all focus on Luther’s paradoxical understanding of the freedom event itself and then on the collapse of paradoxical freedom in modernity. Finally, it focuses on possibly triggering anew this freedom event by – to employ a theatrical metaphor – ‘staging’ it as an eschatological, theodramatic improvisation of Luther’s paradox.

## ■ ‘Repeating forward’

In pleading for openness to the uncontrollable event of pure grace – through the Holy Spirit – in Luther’s understanding of liberty, a ‘hermeneutics of promissory history’ (Moltmann 2000:105) is required. If Luther’s articulation of freedom is seen in this promissory light, the awareness might dawn that his interpretation of Scriptural promises contain an eschatological ‘surplus’, inexhaustible but nevertheless ‘made greater’ by constantly new interpretations (Moltmann 2000:105). To do justice to such promissory hermeneutics, a Kierkegaardian historical perspective of ‘repetition forward’ (cf. Caputo 2013a:40) should surely be preferred to a more Platonic method of ‘recollecting the past+ backward’ (cf. Kearney 2011:7). Kierkegaard (1963:45) himself aptly describes the latter method (recollection) as ‘conservation’. It is like somebody who finds a conserved flower tucked away in the pages of a book and then recollects the circumstances under which it was initially laid there. The past is as it was ‘frozen’ in a static nostalgia of what has already happened once (in the present instance: nostalgia for a freedom that once was). ‘In recollection nothing would be truly at risk ... and consequently nothing “new” would “happen”’ (Caputo 2013a:41). The preferable method of repetition forward, however, focuses on a past reality as kinetically becoming, a revolutionary gift out of the future, namely ‘what once was has the potentiality to disclose itself anew as possibility in the present’ (Vos 2002:125).

62. ‘Event’ derives from the Latin *ex-venire* [to come out of]. It is ‘ungraspable’ in its appearance and its origin and leads to something’s ‘inexhaustible disclosure’ (cf. Lopez 2005:216, 218).

## Freedom as happening

Luther's understanding of freedom should, indeed, be approached as a 'happening of freedom' (Bakker & Schippers 1976:61, [author's own emphasis]). Without doubt, freedom in Luther's theology does not intend 'a static connection but an event ...' (Küng 1981:xiv, [author's own emphasis]). In his early *Commentary on Romans* of 1516 (Luther 1883:56, 378) Luther contrasts God's work and human work as to how they 'happen' differently. '*Semper ita fit, ut opus nostrum intelligamus, antequam fiat. Dei autem opus non intelligimus, donec factum fuerit.*'<sup>63</sup> Bakker's (1988:17) comment on this quotation by Luther is helpful, '[o]ur own projects we can indeed design beforehand but our faith we can (fortunately) not let be insured beforehand'.

To research this happening or event in Luther's freedom discourse requires an optative, seeking mood (Ford 2011:80–82), characteristic of a *theologia viatorum* [theology of wanderers]. This mood is attuned to the mysterious voice of the Spirit, who blows where he wills and lets every truly Spirit-born person, in the same way (*houtoos*) (Jn 3:8), be blown with him (Von Balthasar 1964:48).

This type of theology of course entails no *sacrificium intellectus* [sacrifice of the intellect] but a resolute resistance to any compromises with 'the postulate of our security-longing' (Berkouwer 1967:60). It opposes any *arrivé* attitude that has become estranged from praying the words, *Veni Creator Spiritus* (cf. Berkouwer 1967:243).

## Freedom amid flames

It was the German Lutheran theologian Ebeling (1965:45) who could find 'no theologian – yes, one can easily go further and say: no other thinker' matching Luther in his passionate plea for freedom and also in his gruesome portrayal of the lure of human unfreedom. Though it may understandably be somewhat exaggerated, this opinion of a foremost Luther expert at least alerts any inquiry into Luther's understanding of freedom to take due cognisance of its dark mirror image, namely slavery. Real freedom, as walking the tightrope across the fire of unfreedom, gives dire offence and misunderstanding to superficial, merely human-rational thinking (cf. Ebeling 1965:247–248; Luther 1961:85). To be sure, this type of offense is something else than the true stumbling block (*skandalon*) presented by the gospel itself (1 Cor 1:23). The latter, true offence, indeed, causes non-transparency but, in Luther's perspective, only to those who attempt to wade through the 'stream of Scripture' like self-confident elephants, conscious of their own powerful reason yet still drowning in the mysterious depths of truth. Sheep, however, symbolise a reading

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63. 'It always happens in this way that we understand *our* work before it happens; *God's* work, however, we do *not* understand until it [already] shall have happened' [author's own emphasis].

of Scripture, respectful of the unfathomable depths yet committing themselves confidently to the waters to be carried to the other side (cf. Boendermaker 1983:45).

To identify the real danger zone surrounding his view of freedom, Luther himself probes the possibilities of theological imagination (cf. Ford 2011:182–187). He imaginatively employs the metaphorical language of the biblical book Proverbs: ‘Can a man, asks Solomon, carry fire in his bosom and his clothes and not be burned (Pr 6:27)?’ (Luther 1961:83–84). Here the true fiery zone of offence for the natural mind as it inheres Luther’s unique understanding of Christian freedom (cf. Luther 1961:85) is exposed – albeit obliquely. According to Luther (1961:83–84), the righteousness of faith – entailing freedom – must be ‘tested’ by a ‘fire in the bosom’. Freedom is thus tested by the possibility that the (coals of) fire which it carries in its bosom can conflagrate into a pernicious, devouring fire. Glowing coals previously kept at bay, then combust – either into lawless licentiousness or into dead works and ceremonies. Of course, real freedom is part of a ‘wisdom hidden in mystery (1 Cor 2:7)’ (Luther 1961:85). It can only be approached like a beggar, bowing over the footprints of the divine mystery revealed in Scripture – to use Luther’s own famous words spoken two days before his death (cf. Oberman 1993:166). Yet, it is precisely this ‘beggar-theology’ that uncovers how freedom really is an ‘event’ only as far as fiery coals threaten in the bosom, that is, ‘in the midst of dangers’ (Luther 1961:84).

How, then, is it possible for this freedom to happen in this way? The concept of ‘simul’ (simultaneously) – the ‘fundamental signature of Luther’s thinking’ (Ebeling 1965:15) – provides the key: Freedom and its opposite, slavery, must simultaneously be held together. This not only opens the windows to a freedom that is ‘more excellent than all other liberty’ (Luther 1961:80), but, remarkably, it also creates a form of humour that liberates (cf. Ackermann 2014:281–319; Kearney 2011:42). This liberating humour is exemplified by Luther’s dictum, namely *simul iustus et peccator* [simultaneously just and a sinner] (cf. Ackermann 2014:281).

## ■ Paradox of freedom

### ■ New light?

From the introductory explanations above, the spotlight now turns to Luther’s own exposition (Luther 1961:52–85) of his paradox of freedom in ‘On the freedom of a Christian man’ (1520) (Luther 1961:42–87) and in ‘On the bondage of the will’ (1525) (Luther 1883:600–787). Within the confines and specific purpose of this investigation, these two works can obviously not be discussed extensively; only a few depth soundings are possible. Yet, in determining these soundings, the ‘new frontiers’ in Luther research (Saarinen 2015:9), opened up by the New Finnish School (also known as the Manermaa

School), might prove to be illuminating. Two of these new fields of inquiry are isolated, namely the new insight in Luther's rediscovery of the gratuitous gift and the 'ontological', participatory view of the mystic '*unio cum Christo*' [unity with Christ]. Our query of these two aspects is inspired by the possibility of deeper penetration into the dynamics of the freedom paradox in Luther.

The first aspect to be explored is gift exchange. 'A deeper theological understanding of giving and receiving *beneficia* can ... elucidate the difficult issues of freedom and bondage in Luther's theology', according to Saarinen (2015:10) in his evaluation of new contributions from the Manermaa School. Indeed, in the wake of this new movement, Luther's theology is being rediscovered as revolutionary in that it intended a 'pure gift without reciprocation' (Hamm 2015:125). This is part of what Welker (2012:134, 140) calls Luther's 'revolutionary theology' of the Cross, that remains so even 'until today'. Against the traditional décor of 'the exchange-oriented religiosity of gift', Hamm (2015:148) discusses the characteristic notion of the '*fröhliche Wechsel*' [joyful exchange] in the heart of Luther's understanding of freedom as a prime expression of his 'new theology of gift'. Christ takes our bondage to sinful hatred onto himself (the anti-gift per se) to return to us his eternal freedom-in-love (the gift per se). In 'contradistinction to the entire theological understanding' about, inter alia, justification and freedom before him – which rested on the basis of '*do ut des*' [I give in order that you may give] – Luther discovered the divine gift as a gift 'without a gift in return'. Christ's exchange of our unfreedom for his freedom, as a totally unmerited gift, should thus flow over into our giving love without reciprocation to other people (Hamm 2015:138–139, 148).

The next point for exploration is participation in Christ: More controversial (cf. Horton 2007:174–180 for critique) than the previous emphasis that was brought forward by the Manermaa School is the discovery of an 'ontological', participatory element in Luther's views of grace and freedom (cf. Lundén 2008:1–5). Especially in the argument of *De servo arbitrio* (1525) (Luther 1883:600–787), this participatory aspect seems to be sharply profiled.

One aspect of the colourful tapestry (cf. Akerboom 2010:268) comprising *De servo arbitrio* can here briefly be lifted out. This is the passage where a 'sudden intrusion' (Jenson 1994:251) from Luther's 1520 discourse (cf. below) occurs, namely the phrase 'royal freedom' (*regia libertas*). Here Luther (1883:635), amid his titanic struggle against the influential humanist Erasmus' conviction about the free will, reinforces his view that precisely this regal liberty paradoxically translates our being *servi et captivi* [slaves and captives] of God in Christ, belonging to the booty that he has 'rapt' (*rapiat*) from Satan and from our own selves – *incurvatus in se* [curved into ourselves] as we are. Sensitised by the new Finnish research, one might here detect a deepening of Luther's thinking compared to what he wrote in his treatise of autumn 1520 (Küng 1995:536). Having said that, it must, however, be admitted that, in a sermon a few months later (Christmas 1520), Luther (1999:25) could



speak in the most ‘ontological’ terms of the paradoxical union of Christ with Christians, namely ‘one cake becomes out of them’ (*da wirt eyn kuch auss*) (Luther 1999:25). A further instance of this ‘ontological’ parlance is:

Look, so Christ takes away our birth from us, takes it on Him, lets it descend in His birth, and gives us His, in order that we might therein be purified and renewed – as if it was our own birth. (p. 23)

Luther maintained against Erasmus that he indeed employs ‘paradoxes of no small moment’ (*non parvi momenti paradoxa*) (Luther 1883:634). This, however, is the only way he sees it fit to speak of the unfathomable truths of faith, for example, that God does not ‘compel’ (*coacte*) us to act and that he, nevertheless, does all in all (cf. Exalto 1982:172). Whereas *liberum arbitrium*, in the last analysis, belongs to the triune God alone, as Jenson (1994:250–251; cf. Lundén 2008:5) has lucidly pointed out, we have our freedom in no other way than by us being ‘enraptured’ in him and thus participating in him and his *beneficium* of divine freedom. It is important to note that this paradoxical rapture is wrought solely ‘through his Spirit’ (*per spiritum eius*) (Luther 1883:635) – indeed ‘by that personhood in which he [*sic*] is his own freedom’ (Jenson 1994:252).

A further example of new light coming from the Scandinavian research is the way in which Jenson (1994:249–250) portrays Luther’s refutation of ‘a thoroughly modern’ argument. It is as if the Reformer foresees the modern differentiation between ‘formal and material freedom’ (cf. Berkouwer 1957:372–379) when he denies the existence of *merum velle* [mere willing], meaning a real yet unengaged will. He calls it a ‘dialectical figment’ (Jenson 1994:249). Luther (1883:636) does accept that man has a ‘dispositional aptness’ (*dispositivam ... aptitudinem*) to be free. Yet, this disposition is the anthropological place of actual freedom only as I am ‘rapt’ (*rapi*) into free action, by another than myself (the triune God) (Jenson 1994:250).

## Tillich’s misunderstanding

Remarkably, Tillich (1962) interprets Luther’s contrapuntal way of presenting real freedom as ‘a principle of paradox’ (1962:175–177, [*author’s own emphasis*]). He even suspects that it looms ‘behind all paradoxes of Protestant thinking’. However, one might ask whether the characterisation by Tillich (1962:175) of paradox as a principle in Luther’s thinking does not petrify the Wittenberger’s way of employing it, making it something formalistic and thus a paralysis of the rationally inexplicable tension belonging to a living *theologia crucis* (cf. Bakker 1988:18; Welker 2012:135–143). Instead, ‘paradox’ should rather be understood within the ambit of ‘genuine theological mysteries’, which are ungraspable due to ‘present conceptual limitations in our cognitive apparatus’ (Anderson 2007:256). To Luther, Christian freedom is *para doxan* [beyond reason], yet not *anti doxan* [against reason]. Paradox resembles St. Paul’s metaphor of ‘treasures in jars of clay’

(2 Cor 4:7) within which the mystery of freedom is carried through history's vicissitudes. The paradox of freedom harbours, within its mysterious oppositeness, an inexpressible and overwhelming surprise – bursting forth again and again in the life of the church. It indeed resembles the dynamic vitality of the great Christological paradoxes attempted at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE (cf. Welker 2012:256). In short, Luther's paradoxical formulations point to an ongoing 'Chalcedonian way of thinking' (cf. Reed 2000:186).

## **'The whole of a Christian life in a brief form'**

The heading of this paragraph reflects the claim that Luther himself made for his treatise on liberty (Luther 1961:52). A mere sketch of his argument may suffice for our purpose (cf. Jüngel 1988:passim, for in-depth analysis).

Luther's first thesis deals with the question of 'freedom from'. How can a Christian become truly free from the self, being a self which is *incurvatus in se* [curved in upon himself], hopelessly enslaved by sin to oneself and the world, including a self-centred 'religious world'? It proves impossible to 'extract yourself by your own hair from the morass' (Bakker 1983a:14). Utilising, among others, the distinction between outer and inner man and old and new man, Luther finds the true freedom of a Christian where the inner man is taken *extra nos* [outside ourselves] and outside anything or anyone in this external world, thus becoming a free lord above all and subject to nobody. This is made possible by the promises of the Word of God as embraced by faith alone. The inner man becomes more and more saturated by the Word of God in which it resides through faith (Luther 1961):

If a touch of Christ healed, how much more will this most tender touch, this absorbing of the Word, communicate to the soul all things that belong to the Word? (p. 58)

This, then, constitutes the event of freedom, namely faith in its '*Worthaftigkeit*' [Word-likeness] brings forth a 'spiritual ecstasy' (the Greek *ekstasis* means, 'a standing out of oneself'), a happening of 'being plucked out' (Pannenberg 1986:95) of oneself (the old man) into Christ (cf. Ebeling 1965:301–303). Faith thus holds God as trustworthy and gives rise to the inner man's participation in Christ himself and thus, arguably 'ontological' (cf. above), in the 'wonderful exchange' (*admirabile commercium*) between Christ, the bridegroom, and his bride, the believers. 'If God is in us, then we are outside ourselves' (Jüngel 1988:75). This dynamic, paradoxical event of exchange makes Christians, sharing in Christ's *beneficia*, 'the freest of kings ... [*and*] also priests forever' (Luther 1961:60–62, 64).

However, with equal intensity Luther, in the second thesis of his treatise on freedom, speaks of a freedom for, a liberty to become a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. A person whose inner freedom has been secured, through faith, as being outside him or herself in Christ can love freely and selflessly in the outer man and the external world.

‘A Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbour’ (Luther 1961:80). The Reformer even goes so far as to affirm that, ‘each one should become as it were a Christ to the other’ (Luther 1961:76).

## ■ Perversion of paradoxical freedom

### ■ ‘Undoing’ the liberty event

The question of whether the event of paradoxical Christian freedom in Luther’s theology may be ‘repeated forward’ today (cf. above) is, in this subsection of our discourse, confronted by an inadvertent but momentous attempt to ‘undo’ that event. Guided by Luther’s fecund metaphorical reading of Proverbs 6:27, one could venture to say that, in order to ‘undo’ the event of Luther’s paradoxical *simul* of opposites, the necessity of removing the threat of the fire in the bosom arises, which is so crucial to that event (cf. Bakker 1983a:42–43.) According to the philosopher Žižek (2014:162, 178), it is indeed possible for an event to be undone in such a way that it is:

[N]ot directly denied but denied retroactively ... step by step ... axioms (in our present context: the axiom of the *paradoxical simul* of freedom and un-freedom) are *de facto* deprived of their substance. (p. 163)

A gradual evaporation of the danger zone around the idea of freedom becomes apparent during the shift from Reformation to modern paradigm (cf. Caputo 2013b:239–240; Küng 1995:542, 650, 766 for a discussion of the application of the paradigm concept to church history). This collapse of freedom’s perilous ambience inexorably led to a falling apart of the paradoxical tension between its polarities. The very phenomenon that Luther sought to overcome (cf. above) thus became reality: Freedom dwindled into unbridled autonomy and unfreedom degenerated into tyrannical heteronomy.

In the remainder of this section, this modernistic undoing of Luther’s freedom event must be unpacked vis-à-vis this double distortion of freedom. Our orientation point will be ‘The legend of the grand inquisitor’ in *The brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky (1921–1981), a book that, with good reason, has been described as engaging itself thoroughly with ‘fundamental theology’ (cf. Ward 2010:200). The ‘Legend’ can truly be hailed as ‘a magnificent Song of Songs’ (Küng 1971:62) on the simultaneity of freedom and slavery.

### ■ Degeneration of the ‘freedom pole’

Our attention must now turn to the scorched ‘freedom pole’ that is remaining, severed from the servitude pole, after the conflagration destroyed the *simul*. What developed was a ‘treacherous idea of freedom as subjective licentiousness ... that acknowledges no norm,

no transcendent law' and eventually leads to nihilism (Bultmann 1965:43–44). Reason alone was deemed supreme in so far as it promised a 'quasi-geometrical certainty' (Küng 1995:666–667). In short, the Euclidean mind started its reign. 'Quite uncomplicatedly, cause precedes effect ... everything that flows finds its proper level'– this is how the 'Euclidean mind' works, at least, according to Ivan Karamazov, the narrator of the grand inquisitor tale (Dostoevsky 1981:293).

Taking up the famous nomenclature of the 1960s, one might speak of a one-dimensional mindset, accompanying the evolvement of a new, bourgeois human type. In fact, with Küng (1995:739–742), one could categorise the development of bourgeois man as the fourth of the 'great forces of modernity'. In a fascinating overview, the philosopher Bloch (1968:1119–1124) traces the genesis of the bourgeois phenomenon. He analyses (without generalising) the two attitudes of *vita activa* [active life] and *vita passiva* [passive life] – prominent in late medieval debates – as they degenerated into bourgeois forms. The *activa* shrunk into activist freedom, a toad perspective without any deep thinking while he *passiva* gravitated into contemplative freedom, a studied indifference in intellectualistic ivory towers, which, according to Marx, only 'interpreted the world differently; it is crucial to change it' (cf. Bloch 1968:319).

Our focus will fall on the first manifestation of bourgeois man (activist pettiness) because specifically that type of freedom terrifies the grand inquisitor. Ivan Karamazov himself, the narrator of the 'Legend', seems to gravitate more towards a rebellious contemplation of freedom. Although this rebellion is fervently conscience-driven, raging against every theodicy, it fails to break open the apathy permeating modernistic freedom (Dostoevsky 1981:284–297).

The mythic figure of Narcissus, staring into the modernistic version of his reputed mirror, serves Pacini (1987:114; [*author's own emphasis*]) well in picturing activist bourgeois man, finding himself being reflected as a double image, '[b]eneath the glittering, highly moral and political piety of *autonomous* Narcissus [*lurks*] a *desolation* and a solitude.' This observation suggests precisely the 'double motif' that Dostoevsky illuminates so disturbingly in his clear-sighted description of modern man (cf. Popma & Woldring 1979:36–63).

Dostoevsky insisted that '... when there is no God, everything is allowed' (cf. Jens & Küng 1985:256). The power that medieval philosophy ascribed to God, such as omnipotent freedom, was 'inherited' by the autonomous bourgeois (Girard 1997:92–93). It gave a sense of self-sufficiency to 'all the little St Petersburg bureaucrats who pass(ed) with no transition from the medieval universe to contemporary [*19th century*] nihilism' (Girard 1997:93). Abandoning 'the search for another land (and) ... satisfied with what the palpable world before him offers' (Neven 1980:15), bourgeois man came to exist 'so to speak, in the realm of the middle, the mean ... the paradise of the happy and at the same time the secure haven of the un-happy' (Barth 1959:110).

## ■ Degeneration of the servitude pole in *The Grand Inquisitor*

The narrative of this story is that a miracle-working Jesus returns to the Seville of the 16th century. Having imprisoned him, a 90-year-old grand inquisitor stays the night with his silent prisoner, Jesus, eloquently expanding on his accusation that Jesus had wrongly given his marvellous freedom to mankind. The inquisitor as it were plays devil's advocate by arguing that Jesus should have acquiesced to the three diabolical temptations in the wilderness (Mt 4). After the church man had ended his speech the silent prisoner 'suddenly goes over to the old man and kisses him gently on his old, bloodless lips. And that is his only answer.' Then the grand inquisitor opens the door and shouts to Jesus, '[g]o now and do not come back ... ever!' (Dostoevsky 1981:316).

The story has a 'philanthropic' aspect. Notably, it is precisely for the happiness of the free people that the very control by the grand inquisitor and his ilk is deemed necessary. They should act as guarantors of the security (cf. Duyndam 2005:168) which these perplexed bourgeois people crave. Here we have perhaps arrived at 'the most unique and perplexing aspect' of the way in which the grand inquisitor wants to correct Christ's response to the temptations, namely the old church man's 'benign', philanthropist motivation to do so (Dostoevsky 1981, cf. Kroeker & Ward 2002:138).

Was it not our love for men that made us resign to the idea of their impotence and lovingly try to lighten the burden of their responsibility, even allowing their weak nature to sin, but with our permission? You come to interfere with our work ... (p. 309)

The story also has an authoritarian aspect. The tragicomedy inherent in the purpose of 'well-meaning' modernistic figures and movements to protect the masses from the anxiety caused by the 'formal' freedom to choose autonomously (cf. Berkouwer 1957:348–349; Sartre 1967:16–27) is the gravitation of that same philanthropy into an authoritarian repression of freedom of the worst kind. Wood (2002:13) comments insightfully that the grand inquisitor is 'perhaps the most frightening augury in the entirety of Dostoevsky's work' as far as the totalitarian disasters of the 20th century are concerned – not the least, the thoroughly atheistic dictatorial era of Stalinism in Russia. Over against the liberating, joyous freedom which numerous Russian '... bourgeois liberals of the 1870's' greeted as the spoils of atheism, Dostoevsky brought out the dark underground of atheism (cf. McGrath 2004:148–149). Ironically, Girard (1997:128–129, [*author's own emphasis*]) surmises that, '[t]he grand Promethean enterprise, *fruit of Christian freedom*, will end in "cannibalism" ... It is the freedom of Christ, *perverted but still vital*, that produces the underground.'

## ■ Dostoevsky's *transitus* towards a renewal of Luther's paradox

The Slovenian philosopher, Žižek (2010:401), is fascinated by the thought that there can be no other way for a church to spread light than when it becomes such a burning, light-giving

church in this, our 21st-century's twilight zone of manipulated freedom (cf. Zizek 2010:358–359). One of the key elements in becoming such a burning church should be sought in the kenotic way of freedom, adumbrated in Luther's paradox and, in his own way and circumstances, echoed by Dostoevsky. In his passionate search for the retrieval of real Christian freedom of conscience (cf. Kearney 2011:187), Dostoevsky opens up the possibility of a real repetition forward of the event of true Christian freedom (Kearney 2011:7). This consists not in an eschewing of the underground anxiety – either by burying this anguish in bourgeois platitudes or by usurping it in protective authoritarianism. Rather, as the novelist himself experienced, it entails an immersion into that very nihilistic despair – 'so profoundly' that the light of freedom comes from beyond the darkness, as Girard (1997:137) describes it, citing Dostoevsky's own 'cry', '[i]t is not as a child that I believe in Christ and confess Him. It is through the crucible of doubt that my Hosanna has passed' (Kearney 2011:138).

In this passing through or *transitus* from doubt to a new certainty, a structural reminiscence of Augustine's *Confessions* and even Dante's *The divine Comedy* is discernible – not to speak of Luther, in whose theology *transitus* plays a key role (Asendorf 1988:113). 'It is the structure of the incarnation, the fundamental structure of Western art and Western experience ... the form of a death and a resurrection' (Girard 1997:140–141). Dostoevsky 'splendidly presents the two sides of theology: the believing side and the doubting side, in the brothers Karamazov, Alyosha and Ivan' (Moltmann 2000:16). Yet, having passed through 'an excruciating struggle with God' (Camus 1964:154) towards the end of his last book, this 'existential novelist, ... [who created] a *clair-obscur* that is more piercing than the light of day ... chooses against his characters ... for humiliation' (Camus 1964:115, 116). Does this not show us the way to a 'moment of radicalized "innocence" (*in-nocens*) ... an apophatic breakthrough ... a liminal event' of renewed Christian freedom (Kearney 2011:8)?

## ■ Retrieving Luther's 'future-past' freedom theodramatically

The question is whether Luther's paradoxical event of freedom, after having been almost totally reduced to ashes through modernistic negligence of the 'fire in the bosom', can, in the flames of that very incineration, produce light for today (cf. Zizek's observation above). It is noteworthy that this possibility may lead to the daybreak of what Kearney (2011:54) foresees as the 'eschatological paradox of past-as-future or anticipatory memory'. He discerns this clearly in the words 'until he comes', reiterated at celebrations of the Eucharist. Moltmann (2000:104) discerns a 'future in the past' which has to be hermeneutically translated 'for the present of that future today... [*because*] in the undertakings, hopes and promises of past generations something is present' which still awaits fulfilment.

To retrieve paradoxical freedom in an eschatological mode would therefore – this, at least, is the argument in the last part of our discourse – require a *more* ‘*theodramatic perspective*’ (cf. Vanhoozer 2014:90–94, 108–110). Our performing of that freedom, within an eschatological scope and as part of the penultimate act of a five-act play, can find a more participatory accent than merely in an epic or lyric mode of presentation (cf. Ford 2011:24–26). This should, in fact, be a main concern for the future of Christian theology as such today, ‘[h]uman freedom ... means constant discernment of vocation and responsibility within an *unfolding drama* whose central act is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ’ (Ford 2011:27, [author’s own emphasis]).

The way along which the paradoxical aspect of Christian freedom is profiled by the apostle Paul, utilising the phrase ‘as if not’ and blending it with God’s eschatological drama, is unsurpassed. This he accomplished in the eventful utterance of 1 Corinthians 7:29–32. The paradoxes find their motivation in the final words: For this world in its present form passes away. The expression ‘this world in its present form’ translates the Greek *to schéma tou kosmou toutou*. Calvin comments beautifully on the theatrical metaphor hidden in the word *schema* (Calvin 1972):

It seems as if he has a *dramatic presentation* in mind in which, when the curtains are drawn away, immediately, in the blink of an eye, another image is shown; and that which were in front of the spectators’ eyes, are *suddenly* taken away. (p. 131, [author’s own emphasis])

Something of this expectation, that the curtain is suddenly drawn away and the beginning of a new act of the same drama is at hand, seems to be present towards the end of *The brothers Karamazov*. The reader is invited to read what Dostoevsky (1981:2) called the ‘second’ and ‘main’ story, which describes the life of the hero in our time, at this very moment. With Kroeker and Ward (2002:28), one could interpret the author’s invitation to the reader as a ‘cunning’ challenge to embody in his or her life today the continuation of the first novel. It calls for an enacting of the second novel ‘as the drama of our own lives.’ Our improvised response to this provocation, provided it is prompted by the Spirit, could trigger the ‘event in the ongoing drama’ (Ford 2011:42). Luther’s paradoxical freedom could happen again – and then specifically as a counter drama to all of the narratives and mega narratives of this passing age. Instead of God being a supporting actor in our life story, we become part of the cast that the Spirit is recruiting for God’s drama (Horton 2011:19).

## ■ Eschatological improvisation as happening of Luther’s paradoxical freedom

It was Luther’s conviction that baptism is an entry ‘*ad aliam vitam*’ [towards another life] and therefore also towards a life of eschatological pilgrimage in the present aeon (cf. Bakker



1964:76 – no source for the quotation of Luther is indicated; cf. also Jüngel 1988:65). Viewed in theodramatic perspective, baptism means entering the 'other life' acted out in the cosmic drama of the kingdom of God (cf. Wells 2004:57). Baptised believers imagine themselves as being actors, interpretatively improvising the freedom of that 'other life' for which Christ has made us free (Gl 5:1), but they do so in acute awareness of the theodrama's specific act in which they find themselves at this moment. A salient biblical example of this improvisatory freedom that exists where the Spirit of the Lord is present (2 Cor 3:17) can be found in the way in which the exalted Christ continues his work (Ac 1:1) through his 'ecclesial theatrical company', as narrated in the book of Acts. With good reason, the Acts of the Apostles as a whole can, in fact, be depicted as 'a stream of new unpredictable improvisations' (Wells 2004:66, quoting Begbie 2000:222–223). 'Improvisation is the freedom of a christian to continue the story of the Christ in new places.' Luther's description is apt, 'each one should become as it were a Christ to the other' (Vanhoozer 2014:194–195; for the quotation *vide* Luther 1961:76).

Luther's remarkable 'as it were' certainly translates well into the metaphorical model of a theodramatic improvisation as part of the penultimate act of the kingdom drama. When the realisation dawns upon Christians that it is the *kairos* [opportune time] to awake from sleep and to clothe themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (Rm 13:8–14), they already start improvising the 'as it were' of being a 'little Christ' in today's Spirit-formed 'dress rehearsal' of the coming age and its ineffable freedom (cf. Horton 2011:869). To summarise, in Christians' role of imagining acts and words to improvise the freedom-in-love of the Lord Jesus Christ – whom they have imaginatively in faith 'put on' like clothing – the reality of that freedom may unexpectedly happen as a 'remembering forward' of earlier improvisations. It can explode, amid hoping against all hope (Rm 4:18; cf. Caputo 2013a:12), into concrete acts of love, friendship and reconciliation within Southern Africa or wherever in this world.

## ■ Conclusion

Firstly, the 'remembering forward' of Luther's freedom paradox as event in the 21st-century, after its modernistic collapse, epitomised in the grand inquisitor, can possibly be galvanised by a theodramatic improvisation of the eschatological-paradoxical sighing (Rm 8:23) of the liberated children of God (Rm 8:15–16). This sigh is impossible to improvise through our own discerning activity (Wells 2004:66); it is ineffable in its mysterious depths. Only the Holy Spirit can pray this inside and beyond all our improvisations (Rm 8:26–27). Yet, through the Spirit's 'intercession' in our hearts, he 'prompts' and 'nudges' us as actors to find the appropriate words with which we could possibly improvise the unique liberation inherent in that sigh, such as the following:

We already have himself, the Spirit as the First-fruits of the coming total freedom in us. Alas, there is also another aspect of this sigh: the yearning and longing side. It speaks of the not yet of the glorious freedom of the children of God: the First-fruits do not mean the total harvest. (n.p.)



In short, living in the tension of this eschatological paradox today – the already free and simultaneously (*simul*) the not yet totally free – means ‘remembering forward’ Luther’s freedom paradox (cf. Van de Beek 2008:223–225) in such a way that its epic and lyric articulations are swept up into dramatic improvisations (cf. Ford 2011:24–27). These improvisations, then, could become new ‘happenings of hope’ (Rm 8:24–25) while also resonating and reinforcing the sigh of the whole creation in its pangs of pain, yet paradoxically, simultaneous (*simul*) pangs of deep longing – being birth pangs of the coming world (Rm 8:9–22).

Secondly, the improvisatory retrieval of Luther’s freedom paradox today can take its cue from Dostoevsky’s ‘prophetic’ view. Dostoevsky insisted that radical freedom is a gift from the God who is not the ‘big Other’ who ‘guarantees the final success of our endeavours ... [to the contrary] he showed how *God gives us both freedom and responsibility ... this [is a Protestant] paradox ...*’ (Zizek 2010:401, [*author’s own emphasis*]). Does this conviction, rightly ascribed to the Russian novelist, not register some ‘remembering forward’ of Luther’s freedom in an age when ‘the fire in the bosom’ was consuming the broken remnants of that very freedom? If so, this means that ‘dead voices’ are woken up to new life, making reading of their words to a ‘rehearsal for action’ (Knott 2015:109, 112).

Last, but not least, Dostoevsky’s crowning novel is a form of “hymn” to the Trinity’ (Ward 2010:202). It sends out chords of Luther’s profound paradoxical freedom music, flowing forth from a Christian’s faith in the supreme paradox: God as triune. In the final jubilation of freedom – also in our times (cf. Dostoevsky 1981:936) – the three words that come ‘as close as any three words can to giving a “definition” of (the triune) God’ (Volf 2010:125), reverberate: God is love or, translated into Luther’s exuberant language, namely ‘*ein glühender Backoven voller Liebe*’ [a glowing baking oven full of love] (cf. Ebeling 1965:309).

## ■ Summary: Chapter 7

This chapter investigates the ‘repeating forward’ of Luther’s freedom event, that is, opening up the eschatological surplus embedded in many past ‘happenings’ or ‘events’. Thus, a past event can become a gift from the future. If any, Luther’s understanding of freedom is such a ‘happening’, specifically in its inherent paradoxical simultaneity of freedom and unfreedom. However, it exists permanently under the threat of falling apart in its constituent poles of freedom and unfreedom. This is the ‘fire in the bosom’ of paradoxical freedom that could, according to Luther, conflagrate into a roaring fire that consumes itself. After exploring this freedom event in Luther’s own theology, the focus turns to the realisation of that very threat which Luther built into his freedom view – after the paradigm shift to modernity. The burning-away of Luther’s freedom event as a paradoxical unicity resulted in a one-

dimensionality of either irresponsible licentiousness or tyranny. The latter extreme is highlighted as it is masterfully portrayed in *The grand inquisitor* of Dostoevsky. The author Dostoevsky himself counters *the grand inquisitor* by rediscovering – through a fiery trial – the event of freedom in love, granted by the triune God. Taking our cue from Dostoevsky, the 'repeating forward' of Luther's freedom as event is sought in eschatologically improvising the paradoxical sighs of already and not yet.

# The theocentric premises of Calvin's anthropology: Its significance for modern theological anthropologies<sup>64</sup>

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## ■ Introduction

In the famous opening sentences of his *Institutes*, Calvin ties the knowledge of God closely to knowledge of ourselves:<sup>65</sup>

64. This study has been made possible by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF). The views expressed in this chapter do not necessarily reflect the views of the NRF.

65. The *Calvini Opera* volumes will be referenced as CO, with notice of the relevant volume and page. English quotations from John Calvin's 1559 *Institutes* are taken from Calvin (2008) and referenced as Calvin *Inst.*

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## The theocentric premises of Calvin's anthropology

Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For in the first place, no man can survey himself without forewith turning his thought towards the God in whom he lives and moves (*Inst.* 1.1.1; CO 2.32).<sup>66</sup>

The anthropological implications of the above are clear: Theology (knowledge of God) and anthropology (knowledge of the self) are intricately intertwined. Personal identity cannot be isolated from our concept of God because God is the origin and sustainer of human life. Our inability to understand God's identity will necessarily lead to distorted personal identities.

Not only does Calvin regard our concept of God as foundational to personal identity, but anthropological categories influence his theology in a variety of ways. Calvin, for instance, uses his understanding of the relationship between body and soul as a microcosmic example to describe the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms, the heavenly and earthly kingdoms and church and state (*Inst.* 4.20.1; CO 2.1092). Calvin's understanding of reason as the ruler of the soul led him to emphasise the noetic character of sin (*Inst.* 1.15.7; CO 2.141). Whereas Augustine ascribed the transmission of sin to sexual concupiscence, Calvin's notion of human reason led him to ascribe the transmission of sin to a noetic blindness (Vorster 2013:45–63). Furthermore, his view of the human body as a finite 'prison' inhabited by fleshly desires caused him to regard full sanctification as only possible at the arrival of the eschaton (*Inst.* 3.3.20; CO 2.450). Maybe the best illustration of the importance that Calvin attached to anthropological considerations is illustrated by his description of the human being as a microcosm of God's works and a 'mirror' that reflects God's glory the brightest among the creaturely realm (*Inst.* 1.5.3; CO 2.43).

Despite the import of anthropological concepts in Calvin's theology, his anthropology is often perceived as not relevant for modern anthropological projects. To begin with, there seems to be a widespread belief that Calvin's theocentrism automatically limits the anthropological significance of his theological corpus. Calvin is accused of emphasising divine sovereignty to such a degree that human freedom is compromised (see Gregory 2012:207–208; König 2002:127). This impression, combined with the fact that Calvin like most of his contemporaries did not provide a systematic doctrine on the human being, has contributed to an underestimation of the significance that Calvin's anthropology could have for contemporary theological-anthropological projects. Theocentric theology, however, does not necessarily imply that anthropological reflections are sidelined. In fact, theocentrism is what makes theological anthropology a unique enterprise, distinguishable from other anthropological

.....  
66. *Tota fere sapientiae nostrae summa, quae vera demum ac solidata sapientia censi debet, duabus partibus constat, Dei cognition et nostril. Caeterum, quum multis inter se vinculis connexae sint, ultra tamen alteram praecedat, et ex se pariat, non facile est discendere. Nam primo se nemo aspicere potest quin ad Dei, in quo vivit est movetur.*'

projects. Schwöbel (1991:145) rightly cautions against a strategy of ‘reinterpreting non-theological anthropologies’ theologically or ‘accepting these theories as bases for anthropological understanding’ and then adding some Christian perspectives. Such endeavours are incapable of doing justice to the theological principle that adequate knowledge of humans depends on adequate knowledge of God. Schwöbel (1991:145) is correct when he asserts that the relationship between ‘theological anthropology’ and ‘non-theological anthropologies’ should not be seen in terms of ‘synthesis’ but in terms of ‘dialogue’. A synthesis between theological anthropology, the human sciences and disciplines such as evolutionary neurology and neuropsychology is not possible because theological anthropology attempts to make sense of reality without offering objective, falsifiable scientific evidence for the existence of God or the authenticity of God’s revelation (Southgate 2009:374). This, however, does not mean that no interdisciplinary dialogue is possible. After all, some of the theories of human sciences are also not falsifiable, especially when anthropological claims are derived from the study of the interior subjectivity of the human being. The interior human consciousness is largely an inaccessible mystery because of the sheer complexity of all the emotions, impulses, physical traits, passions, desires, intellectual capabilities and social conditions that constitute it. This forces the human sciences to resort to theories rather than factual evidence to substantiate their claims about human interiority. Since the truth claims of theological anthropology cannot be dismissed a priori simply because they are non-empirical in nature and since the human sciences also resort to preliminary theories rather than factual evidence as far as human interiority is concerned, dialogue between the various disciplines should be seen as feasible as long as the various disciplines are honest about their limitations and their presuppositions.

Secondly, some theologians perceive Calvin’s anthropology as displaying a Platonic type of dualism. His anthropology is therefore described as highly problematic and as of less significance than the rest of his doctrinal corpus (see Quistorp 1955:101; Van Wyk 1993). In response, it ought to be noted that Calvin’s anthropology encompasses more than mere reflections on the relationship between soul and body. His distinction between a human body and soul that possesses an intellect and will is indeed problematic from a modern point of view, but his anthropology is more holistic and nuanced than often assumed. Calvin used the two natures of Christ as analogy to explain the relationship between body and soul. As the two natures of Christ constitute one Christ, body and soul form one human person. Yet, as the two natures of Christ do not exist as a blending of substances, the soul and body are two different substances. The soul cannot be body, and the body cannot be soul, but each retains its own properties (*Inst.* 2.14.1; *CO* 2.353). Calvin uses this analogy to differentiate between body and soul in order to relate them to each other. Moreover, Calvin’s intention with the distinction between soul and body is to make theological points about human existence in relationship to God, rather than offering a scientific analysis of the human person’s physical and psychological structure.

Thirdly, some theologians regard Calvin’s anthropology as outdated because it is informed by a premodern setting and premodern concepts such as substance and essence

that are no longer intelligible to modern people (Kelsey 2009:32). Though this is undeniably true, modern theologians need to be cautious not to abandon all classical philosophical concepts out of hand. Kelsey (2009:566) rightly reminds us that the use of metaphysical philosophical concepts in theology has a 'long-standing precedent' and is 'inescapable' because they tie up 'loose ends' in theology.

Obviously, some aspects of Calvin's anthropology are dated. Calvin was a child of his time and was greatly influenced by the premodern world views of the time. He lived in a pre-Darwinian world that did not have access to the vast body of modern scientific knowledge about the evolution of human beings and their physical and psychological attributes. Calvin utilised the philosophical, conceptual and exegetical apparatus available in his time to address the anthropological questions of his era. Some of this apparatus is indeed methodologically outdated and no longer able to address modern questions. Other problematic features of his theological anthropology include his devaluation of the human body, his grounding of human uniqueness in the ratio and will of the immortal soul and his view on women as occupying a subordinate status in the familial, ecclesiastical and social spheres.

The scope of the inquiry does not allow for an extended historical explication of Calvin's anthropology. For this purpose, readers can consult the works of Engel (1988), Shih (2004), Torrance (1957), Van Eck (1992) and Van Vliet (2009). In what follows, I focus on the theocentric premises of Calvin's anthropology and the significance thereof for modern theological anthropologies. My contention is that Calvin's theocentric approach to anthropology serves as an important correction to the inclination of some modern Christian anthropologies to use human self-consciousness as orientating principle and to reconcile Christian anthropological concepts with various scientific discourses. In doing so, they are in danger of sacrificing the unique contribution that a theological approach can make to the anthropological debate. In what follows, I focus on the theocentric premises that Calvin utilises to develop his anthropology, and I indicate how his theocentric approach emanates in an eccentric grounding of human identity. His decentring of the human being allows him to avoid the pitfalls of monism, dualism, reductionism and narcissism while opening up avenues for more coherent reflection on the notion of human dignity. Lastly, Calvin's anthropology displays promising perspectives concerning ecology because he relates creation in the first place to the glory of God not to the instrumental interests of the human being.

## ■ The theocentric premises of Calvin's theological anthropology

Theocentric anthropology posits that who we are is determined by how God relates to us (Kelsey 2009:48). Since anthropological questions are dependent on our basic beliefs about God, they are framed and governed in terms of the doctrine of God (Kelsey 2009:8, 29).

Calvin's anthropology is decisively theocentric in nature in that he subordinates claims about human beings to claims about God. Since nothing exists apart from God, human beings depend entirely on God and can only be understood in relationship to God (*Inst.* 1.5.3; CO 2.134). By locating the centre of human existence outside human self-determination and human self-consciousness in a life of communion with God and fellow human beings, Calvin decentres the human being. For Calvin, life literally originates from God who 'breathes life and energy in all things' and who is the one in whom we live and move (*Inst.* 4.17.8; CO 2.1007–1008).<sup>67</sup>

Though Calvin relates God and human beings closely, he strongly resists the conflation of divine and human nature. Against Osiander who states that human essence emanates from the essence of God, Calvin maintains that humanity's image of God does not connote natural properties but is relational and dynamic in nature and pertains to spiritual things (*Inst.* 1.15.3; CO 2.137). Calvin is adamant that the creaturely realm should not be deified but that heavenly and earthly things should be kept apart (Miles 1981:318). This perspective of Calvin is, in my view, important for theological anthropology and corresponds with the classical Christian doctrine of Creation being created *ex nihilo*, which maintains that Creator and creature do not share the same being but that they are ontologically distinct though not separate (Kelsey 2009:55; 64). What God gives at Creation is not Godself but something wholly different and distinct from himself. To conflate God's being with creation (pantheism) or to describe creation as part of God's being (panentheism) is problematic because nature is a highly ambiguous reality where creatures violate and destroy each other. If we conflate God and Creation, God's sovereignty, freedom, holiness and goodness are compromised while creaturely integrity also is endangered. True divine love does not consist in God overpowering creatures but by him relating to the creaturely reality by fostering the creature's otherness (Kelsey 2009:72).

Calvin does not fuse the transcendent and immanent realms and neither does he sharply separate them, but he correlates them through his Christology and Pneumatology. On the one hand, Calvin maintains a sharp distinction between God and creature by denying any creational ontological unity between God and creatures. God is the totally Other who is radically sovereign and free. He occupies a different ontological plane to human beings and is not subject to creaturely finiteness. On the other hand, God is also extremely close to human beings and creation through Christ in the power of the Spirit. He is at once transcendent and immanent. He is free to act yet intimately and intricately involved with his creation through his Spirit (Kelsey 2009:457). Human participation in God through the Spirit, consequently, does not make human beings more divine, but it restores the human person's true humanity by relocating and reorienting human life towards the purpose for which it was created (Schwöbel 1991:159).

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67. '*Vitae fontem et originem, unde omnia ut viverent semper acceperunt... illum etiam creaturas omnes influentem, vim spirandi et vivendi eis instillasse.*'

The theme of descent and ascent is fundamental to Calvin's theocentric approach. Calvin describes the dynamic of the relationship between divine and human life as a divinely initiated cycle of divine descent in Christ and human ascent through the Spirit. Though this theme has patristic and scholastic roots, there is a fundamental difference in the manner in which Calvin constructs them. Calvin is not interested in ontological and realist notions of participation in God but in the way we ascend in Christ through the Spirit to God (*Inst.* 2.12.1; CO 2.340). This cycle of descent and ascent is cosmological in nature since the structure of the world is grounded in Christ and was created in order for Christ to become the Redeemer (*Inst.* 2.12.1; CO 2.346). Not only human beings are 'raised up' to God but the whole of Creation is united in Christ through the Spirit to God. Salvation, thus, is not only a personal and communal event, but it has a structural and cosmological reach (CO 55.446). This naturally entails that human beings cannot be understood apart from their relationship with Christ and cannot have true communion with God outside of the mediator Christ. Canlis (2010:71) rightly notes that, in Calvin's theology, 'anthropology is bound up with participation in the Eternal Son, not because of an innate Godward movement or point of contact, but because of God's own self gift.' Due to their spiritual blindness, human beings cannot ascend by themselves to God, nor can they conquer sin. God descends to us through the incarnation of Christ in order to raise us again to the Father (*Inst.* 1.13.26; CO 2.113):

'And behold a ladder' ... It is Christ alone therefore, who connects heaven and earth: he is the only Mediator who reaches from heaven down to earth: he is the medium through which the fullness of all celestial blessings flows down to us, and through which we in turn, ascend to God. (Calvin 1850:113; CO 23.390–392)<sup>68</sup>

Through his descent and substitutionary atonement, Christ makes the exchange possible that reconciles us with God and enables us to ascend to God by living in communion with him (CO 1.119).

Reconciled with God through Christ and no longer blinded by sin, believers gain sight of Christ as the true image of God. In him, believers can contemplate the true glory of God and gain access to a paradigmatic example of being truly human (SC 11/1.55).<sup>69</sup> The example of Christ, therefore, needs to be imitated by human beings so that they can mirror the glory of God (Torrance 1957:37; *Inst.* 2.12.6; CO 2.558). Wallace ([1959] 1982:41) notes that, throughout his sermons, Calvin refers to Christ as the patron (*configurez*) after which Christians must model their life. Such imitation cannot occur without the Spirit's indwelling in the human person. The *telos* of the Spirit's work is to restore the human's image of God after the pattern of Christ so that Christ's death and

68. 'ecce scala ... Solus ergo Christus est qui coelum terrae coniungit: hic solus est mediator, qui pertingit a coelo usque ad terram: ille idem est per quem omnium bonorum coelestium plenitudo deorsum ad nos fluit, nosque vicissim ad Deum conscendimus.'

69. The *Supplementa Calviniana* will be referenced as SC, also noting page and volume.



resurrection becomes the life pattern of the believer (CO 51.208; CO 55.270; see Garcia 2009:426). Through his regenerative power, the Spirit makes human participation in the God-life possible without conflating or assimilating human and divine nature (*Inst.* 4.17.2; CO 2.1011). The Spirit enlightens human minds; calls the elect; works faith in human hearts and corrects, reforms and renovates the human will (*Inst.* 1.15.4; CO 2.138). Importantly, Calvin does not postulate that the Spirit coerces or compels a person's will, neither that the Spirit changes the human into another kind of being, nor that he obliterates human agency. Instead, the regenerated human being acts while being acted upon by God's grace, entailing that the Spirit does not bypass human faculties in the process of regeneration. In doing so, Calvin attempts to develop a radical notion of human participation in the God-life while at the same securing the human's creaturehood (Canlis 2010:138, 247).

To participate in Christ's death and resurrection, believers need to experience a spiritual descent of their own through a repentance that involves the mortification of sins and a vivification that consists in them ascending to God by taking up a new life in Christ. This can only happen if the Spirit 'raises up' believers from their spiritual death to a new life in Christ. This new life is characterised by a tension between the 'yet' and the 'not yet'. Though the Spirit ends the reign of sin in the lives of believers, sin still dwells in us because of our finite bodily nature and will be totally destroyed only at the eschaton (*Inst.* 1.15.4; CO 2.138). The new life consists of self-denial, cross-bearing and meditation on the future life. Self-denial orients people towards a decentred existence of love to God and our neighbour and therefore stands in stark contrast to our sinful disposition towards self-love, worldly honour, pride and ambition (CO 2.506). Cross-bearing entails partaking in the suffering of Christ by being willing to suffer for the sake of God and being able to transfer our confidence to God when confronted by the trials and tribulations of life (CO 2.516–517). Meditation on the future life involves a life that joyfully anticipates the final consummation. It does not condone a world-denying mysticism or affirm escapist practices such as celibacy or monasticism but entails that the believer finds her ultimate source of joy and happiness in the coming kingdom of God and not in an obsession with worldly things (CO 2.523).

## ■ The relevance of Calvin's theocentric approach to anthropology

Calvin's theocentrism is important for modern theological-anthropological projects for a variety of reasons. Firstly, Calvin's theocentric notion of the divine-human relationship as being characterised by a divinely initiated cycle of descent and ascent enables him to avoid both dualism and monism by grounding the divine-human encounter in a reciprocal relationship of giving and returning. This construction allows

Calvin to differentiate between Creator and creature while also relating them to each other, thus preserving both human creaturehood and divine otherness. The effect of Calvin's Christological and pneumatological approach is not only that he roots his anthropology in the triune God's relationship with human beings but that he actually provides a theological framework that makes possible an intimate personal relationship between God and human beings.

Calvin's claim is that knowledge of God is only possible on the basis of God relating to us by revealing himself in Christ through the power of the Spirit. Human beings cannot be understood apart from their relationship to God because this relationship orients all other human relationships. Though Calvin indeed incorporates the views of Plato and Aristotle in his discussions on the properties of the human being and also recognises the contribution that the natural sciences make to our understanding of God's creation and our cosmology, he is adamant that we can only understand our true nature in relationship to God as revealed through the Word. Schwöbel (1991:154) rightly notes that, from a Christian perspective, personhood cannot be determined exclusively by its relationship to non-human nature because the human relationship to nature is not the single most determinative relationship of human existence. Also, the character of personhood cannot be derived from the reflection on interhuman relationships, because these relationships reflect the 'dislocation' and 'disorientation' of sin. Anthropologies that ground being in immanent structural properties, immanent relationships and self-transcendent human features are prone to descent into extremes because the focal point of orientation is in essence reductionist in nature. Such extremism is also due to proximate physical and social contexts being treated as if they are ultimate contexts.<sup>70</sup> Examples of such extremes are individualism that emphasises human autonomy and distinctiveness to the detriment of the social aspects of human existence, subjectivism that centres human existence in the human mind and human volition, anthropocentrism that emphasises human distinctiveness and agency to the point that non-human reality is objectified and instrumentalised, naturalism that emphasises the continuity between humans and nature to the detriment of human uniqueness and collectivism that takes its starting point in the interests of the group at the expense of individual freedom and distinctiveness. A theocentric approach is not reductionistic because it relates the I (individual), we (group) and it (Creation) to a Thou (God) that created all in his image. The Creator commands human beings to a universal love that correlates the God-given dignity and interests of the I with the corresponding dignity and interests of others while awarding Creation its own God-given dignity independent of human agency. By relating proximate human contexts to the ultimate context of God and by acknowledging the multifaceted relational structure of human existence, theological anthropology correlates freedom and community, rights and duties, particularity and sociality, otherness and relatedness with

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70. The distinction between proximate and ultimate contexts is borrowed from Kelsey [2009:4].

each other. Obviously, a theocentric anthropology can also degenerate into radical extremes such as fundamentalism and sectarianism if the identities of God and human beings are distorted and dislocated from love as the distinct mode of divine being and as the basic pattern for a faithful human existence (Schwöbel 1991:147). Utilising the terminology of Kelsey's book *Eccentric existence*, I argue that authentic human existence exists in a faithful response to the Father, Son and Spirit's creative, reconciling and consummative love that is displayed by God's creative, reconciling and consummating relating to human beings and Creation.

Calvin's theocentrism, secondly, avoids theological abstraction by seeking to understand the *imago Dei* through the lens of the paradigmatic example of Christ. Since the Fall has ruined the image of God in humankind, Calvin posits that we can only derive a clear knowledge of the image from Christ, the second Adam (Ferguson 2013:441). Calvin's Christological approach to the *imago Dei* is, in my view, an important corrective on theories that ground the divine-human encounter in a creational ontology (realism), or on an analysis of the immanent properties that human beings possess (Augustine, Aquinas, Kant), or on views that approach it from the avenues of human feeling and intuition (Schleiermacher). In making this turn, Calvin locates the believers' union with Christ in the historical particularity of Jesus Christ and in the work of the Spirit who communicates the effects of Christ's substitutionary work to us. Kelsey (2009:1008) rightly notes that a Christian theological anthropology is 'self-committed' to understand God '...in ways that are decisively normed by descriptions in canonical Christian Scripture of what and who Jesus of Nazareth is.' This does not mean that we can know Christ comprehensively in his ontological interiority, humanity or divinity, but through his reconciliatory work, he does reveal how God lovingly relates to humans, and he does provide a paradigmatic example of what imaging God is all about. Kelsey (2009) articulates this 'imaging' well:

As those who are in Christ, we have our basic personal identities in Jesus Christ's personal identity, and we are those called to respond in love to God and love-as-neighbors to our fellow creatures. (p. 1048)

Calvin's understanding of the Christ-like life is indeed profoundly concrete and practical in nature. In essence, the imaging of Christ entails that human beings participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Following Kelsey (2009:1016), we can state that Jesus is both the paradigmatic example of 'creaturely bodied humanity' in its finiteness and the proleptic image of the new, resurrected and glorified human that lives under the eschatological reign of Christ.

Thirdly, Calvin's theocentric notion of human existence as a decentred existence necessarily involves that human existence is, to use a Kelsian term, an eccentric way of being because human dignity is grounded and centred outside human beings in God's relationship to us. The theological premise that human dignity resides 'in the sheer gift

character of creation' constitutes a fundamental discontinuity with the Kantian tradition that grounds dignity in the inherent capacities of the human being such as rationality and self-consciousness (Kelsey 2009:278). Since capacities differ from person to person, we need to ask whether it makes philosophical sense to ground dignity in the capacities of human beings, whether these are physical, psychological or ontological in nature. Though not the intention of the Kantian tradition, the practical implication of such a construction is that more capable human beings possess more dignity than others. However, when dignity is understood within the context of human persons as themselves being created gifts, all human beings can be ascribed equal dignity because dignity is not grounded in human properties or capacities but in the reality that God relates creatively to humans (Kelsey 2009:256).

By describing the human being as an end in itself, the Kantian tradition, moreover, risks abstracting people's dignity from the network of relationships in which they find themselves. Admittedly, not to be regarded as a means to an end is a basic precondition for the preservation of human dignity. Nonetheless, the notion of the human person as an end in itself contains anthropocentric overtones that risk neglecting the human person's relatedness to her social and natural context. It often ends up in a distorted kind of introspective orientation that overemphasises self-determination, individuality and autonomy at the expense of other important human and non-human interests. Regrettably, it does not account for the fact that personal identities are not only decisively formed by interactions with fellow human beings, other creatures and their environment but are also highly dependent on them. Webster (2003:231) rightly warns that modernist and postmodernist accounts of freedom follow the same 'trajectory', '[t]hey are deeply voluntarist and expressivist; both think of human being and actions without backgrounds; for both "full freedom" is "situationless".'

When humans are simply treated as ends in themselves without due regard for their historical, cultural, social and natural locatedness, the sustainability of their broader relational environment is endangered. Webster (2003:231) states that once 'the self is eviscerated of any of the communalities and stabilities which make reciprocal relations possible and fruitful, relations become simply arbitrary encounters: shifting, transient, groundless.' The ecological disaster facing humanity and the continuing fracturing of modern societies are clear outcomes of the one-sided notion that human beings ought to be treated as ends in themselves. Instead, we ought to acknowledge that dignity is not simply a right that needs protection but an essentially relational category, a way of life that constantly needs affirmation through the maintenance of the relational structure within which human existence is imbedded. The notion of dignity as creational gift better expresses the relational and responsive quality of human dignity since giving always demands a response of gratitude. We return God's gift by responding appropriately to his gift. In Christian theology, the appropriate response to God's creative relating is a love of God that naturally entails love for fellow created

human beings as gifts of God as well as respect for the natural environment which is God's handiwork (Kelsey 2009:279).

Fourthly, Calvin's understanding of the authentic Christian life as an eccentric, God-centred existence contains promising eco-sensitive perspectives. Calvin depicts creation as a 'theatre of God's glory' within which humans function as stewards of God (CO 2.41). Humans are not merely onlookers at the glory of this theatre, but they themselves are part of the theatre that reflects God's glory (see Kelsey 2009:316). Since creation is a macrocosmic mirror of God's goodness, humans have no right to abuse it, but they ought to enjoy the natural blessings that God provides according to the ends for which God created them (CO 2.530). The created ends of natural things are demonstrated by their inherent qualities (CO 2.530) while the proper use of God's earthly blessings is characterised by an attitude of temperance, frugality and moderation (CO 2.531). Whereas anthropocentric anthropologies with their overemphasis on personalist themes tend to instrumentalise nature by viewing it as a mere habitation for human beings that can be shaped by human agency, Calvin's theocentric anthropology relates Creation not in the first place to the human being but to God. Creation is a divine gift, a mirror of God's glory that needs to be cared for by human beings in obedience to God. Though Calvin does not supply us with a full-blown eco-ethics, his basic perspectives on Creation can be fruitfully utilised by eco-theologians to develop a coherent eco-ethics.

Lastly, Calvin's pneumatology equips his anthropology with a strong eschatological motive that positions the Christian life on a hopeful trajectory. Since Christ's eternal reign already commences in the present time through the power of the Spirit, all temporal acts are laden with eternal significance. History is for Calvin promissory in nature. Not only is it characterised by struggles, ebbs and flows, but it is marked by God's reconciliation with human beings and the coming of God's kingdom. For Calvin, the believer's disposition towards the present ought to be guided by the resurrection motif that vivifies us and causes us to experience the fruits of eternal life in the present. The resurrection motif enables believers to rise above their tribulations and to arrange their actions according to their divine callings (CO 2.528, 532; CO 47.293). Eschatological hope, thus, is closely connected to the concrete enactment of social practices that express hope, joy, purpose and a sense of anticipation. Such practices involve, among other things, sacramental and liturgical actions, moral and ethical leadership and the creation of communities that serve justice and peace.

## ■ Conclusion

Theological anthropology needs to be based on theocentric premises. Whenever human self-consciousness and inferiority becomes the orientating principle, anthropology tends to fall into forms of reductionism. Calvin's positioning of the divine-human relationship

in a divinely initiated cycle of descent enables him to avoid the pitfalls of both dualism and monism. His decentering of the human being and his location of human identity in God's relating to us provide a promising avenue for developing a coherent concept of human dignity. Moreover, Calvin avoids the abstraction so characteristic of scholastic and liberal Protestant anthropologies by using Christ as the paradigmatic example for the Christian life. His depiction of authentic human existence as eccentric contains important impulses for an eco-sensitive theology while the strong eschatological dimension of his anthropology places the Christian life on a hopeful course.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 8

Calvin's anthropology has often been criticised for being overly theocentric, unsystematic, containing dualistic overtones and utilising outdated premodern concepts. This chapter cautions against such a dismissive approach. It argues that Calvin's theocentric approach to anthropology provides us with important tools to avoid the pitfalls of dualism and monism, reductionism and narcissism by locating human identity eccentrically in God's relating to us. Calvin's eccentric approach can help theologians to develop a more coherent theory on human dignity and eco-sensitivity while his eschatological approach positions human life on a hopeful trajectory.

# The origin and calling of the church: The dialogue between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches 500 years after the Reformation<sup>71</sup>

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## ■ Introduction

The 16th-century Reformation of the church did not intend to be a final and complete achievement aimed at regularly recurring applause. It was rather regarded as a permanent imperative. This was programmatically reflected in the well-known phrase *ecclesia*

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*reformata semper reformanda*. It is worthwhile to be continually mindful of this when one considers ways to commemorate the 500th anniversary of this event. Should one moreover recall that the Reformers never intended to form a new church but merely wanted to reform the existing institution, a theme which would be suitable for such a commemoration becomes obvious. If the Reformation did not intend to represent a final position and if separation was not desired, does that not imply that one should question the continued validity of a schism between faith communities that occurred 500 years ago in a world that was entirely different from the one in which the church is currently called to live? Attending to this question seems to me to be an appropriate way to commemorate the Reformation.

The manner in which I want to approach this issue is by means of an analysis and evaluation of some of the aspects of the way in which this question was dealt with in the ecumenical encounters between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches during the last 50 years. This question has precisely been the topic of three extensive rounds of theological conversations that had been held by a joint commission officially representing the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and The Roman Catholic Church.<sup>72</sup>

Broadly speaking, each of these three rounds of conversations successively addressed the subjects of Christology, ecclesiology and the attitude of the Christian in the world. Each of these series of conversations lasted for approximately 6 or 7 years of annual meetings and regularly culminated in an extensive report. The title of such final report in each instance reflected the overarching theme of that particular series of conversations. The theme of the first round (1970–1977) was ‘The presence of Christ in church and world’ (PCCW).<sup>73</sup> The second series of conversations (1984–1990) focused on the respective views of the church resulting in the report ‘Towards a common understanding of the church’ (TCUC) while the third round (1998–2005) attended to the theme ‘The church as community of common witness to the kingdom of God’ (CCCW).

The conversations just mentioned were undertaken with a view to establish whether it would be possible to overcome the separation between the Catholic and Reformed churches for the past 500 years. In each round of conversations, the participants attempted to reach mutual understanding and agreement on a particular set of issues that had been disputed between them for a very long time. There was, however, consistent agreement that, while discussions are conducted in a sympathetic

72. The Reformed family of churches worldwide indeed comprises more churches than those affiliated to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The latter with its 229 member denominations is, however, the most extensive of the eight international Reformed organisations (Bauswein & Vischer 1999:701–708). Although not all Reformed believers would regard the Alliance as representing them, it nevertheless presents a profile that is widely recognised as characteristic of the Reformed tradition.

73. These documents are divided into paragraphs and are usually quoted by using a standardised acronym followed by the number of the paragraph.



and accommodating manner in this process, there would be no compromise on matters of doctrinal principle. Both partners would say together what they could, but they would also identify and frankly formulate that which at that stage could not be the object of consensus (TCUC 2000:para. 90). Far from being contrary to the ecumenical spirit, this approach in fact represents the true essence of ecumenicity.

In spite of the undertaking not to compromise on vital issues, one nevertheless notices in the dialogue reports that the attempts to accommodate each other did from time to time give rise to ambiguities and complexities which often render the reports difficult to interpret. When reading them, one should constantly remember that they are not academic treatises but dialogue reports which require a special hermeneutical awareness.

One should also be aware that, although much has already been achieved in the process of reaching out to each other, the Reformed and Catholic churches still have much to attend to in this regard. It is to be expected that an alienation that developed over a period of more than four and a half centuries would require some time to overcome. It is therefore understandable that a fourth phase of dialogue sessions between these two traditions has been undertaken since 2010 and is scheduled to conclude in 2017. The theme designated for this fourth phase of dialogue is 'The Christian community as an agent of justice'. An interesting and noteworthy particularity is that, in this case, the Reformed tradition is represented by the World Communion of Reformed Churches, a body which was formed in June 2010 by a union of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council. This indicates some progress in the intra-Reformed ecumenicity.

It will be clear that, in discussions spanning a period of almost 50 years, such a broad spectrum of issues had been dealt with that it would be impossible to attend to all of them in a single chapter. The basic question that I want to investigate in this chapter is what the impact of the first three phases of ecumenical conversations between the Reformed and Catholic faith communities has been on the ecclesiology of each of the participating traditions. Did these interactions bring about any development or change in the manner in which Reformed and Catholic people perceive the nature of their being church, respectively? Restricting my investigation to ecclesiological issues does not imply that I attend to a merely rather peripheral aspect of the Reformation. One should keep in mind that the Reformation was mainly the reformation of the church and that the core insight of the Reformation regarding justification by faith to a large extent played itself out in ecclesiological issues.<sup>74</sup>

Commemorating the Reformation by investigating the ecclesiological controversy which it represents requires hermeneutical sensitivity as is the case with any commemoration of past conflict. The reason for this is that commemoration can easily be

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74. Michael Weinrich (1998:67) even goes as far as saying, [*d*]er Dissens und damit das Herzstück der Reformation lag also in dem Verständnis von der Kirche, in der das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung wahrhaftig und unverkürzt verkündigt wird.'

utilised for purposes of self-justification and continuation rather than solving such conflict. Paul Ricoeur therefore reminds us, '[i]t is very important to remember that what is considered a founding event in our collective memory may be a wound in the memory of the other' (in Kearny & Dooley 1999:9). Dealing with past conflict can therefore best be accomplished by the original adversaries recalling that particular conflict in proximity to each other with a consciousness of their interwovenness (Vosloo 2015:9–10). This is the approach which the representatives of the Reformed and Catholic churches adopted in their successive phases of conversations.

My approach in this chapter is first to investigate the way in which the conversation partners jointly interpreted the origin and development of the controversy that had developed between them. Subsequently, I examine the Christological basis in terms of which ecclesiological rapprochement might be achieved. This is followed by an investigation of the progress that has been made by the joint commission's interpretation of the two models of the church which in the past signalled the divergence of the two faith communities involved. Finally, I attend to the manner in which the notion of the kingdom of God has been used to improve these models before making a few remarks by way of conclusion.

## ■ From divergence to ecumenicity

A first step towards the restoration of the broken relationship between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches would be to engage in a joint attempt to ascertain exactly what gave rise to the 16th-century schism and to determine how this rupture since then affected the relationship between them. Such an attempt has in fact explicitly been made during the second phase of dialogue referred to above and has been described in the dialogue report TCUC. An interesting and remarkable aspect of the manner in which the relevant dialogue commission went about performing this task was to invite each of the two delegations involved to separately submit a report explaining their particular view regarding the origin and course of events that became known as the Reformation. These reports were then jointly read and modified as the delegations engaged each other on their interpretations in this regard. Subsequently, these two separate reports were both included in the first chapter of the relevant dialogue report (TCUC 2000:para. 17–63).

This was an exemplary procedure of how to deal with a conflict from the past which is still virulent in the present. It was discovered that, over the centuries, many misunderstandings developed where the motives and pronouncements of each partner were interpreted wrongly (TCUC 2000:para. 12–16). This is of course not to say that all disputed issues have now been resolved satisfactorily. What did become clear, however, was the urgent need to ascertain with clarity and integrity what the real disputes were, how they affected the relationship between the faith communities involved and how they could be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Should the Reformed and Catholic churches still be regarded as

mutually exclusive institutions, or is real unity between them possible? Are the religious convictions which they share not of such a nature that it would enable them to really reach out to each other? Moreover, is the urgent and speedy resolution of their doctrinal differences not of vital importance in order for them jointly to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of salvation in a world that differs dramatically from that of 500 years ago?

In order to answer these questions, one will first have to ascertain what the primary causes of the Reformation were. As has already been explained, each of the two delegations participating in the dialogue provided its own version of the circumstances, events and convictions that gave rise to the development and after-effects of the Reformation. The positive value of this procedure has already been alluded to. However, it also has two negative implications of which readers of TCUC should be aware. The first is that, in spite of a significant measure of mutual benevolence that had developed during the course of the dialogue that resulted in this document, the very fact that two parallel yet separate interpretations of the Reformation were necessary is a clear indication that the two delegations were not yet able to submit a joint rendering in this regard. In spite of being reasonably self-critical, both versions nevertheless function as *orationes pro domo*. This impression is confirmed when one notices the high degree of circumspection with which the two subsections of Chapter 1 of TCUC are formulated. Careful discernment is required to clearly follow the tenor of these two separate versions (Honée 1994:75–91).

The second problematic implication of the two separate versions is related to the fact that both delegations have together screened and approved these versions before their inclusion in the final dialogue report. This resulted in subsequent readers of the dialogue report not having access to the original presentations. It is therefore impossible to ascertain which differences of opinion had at that stage already been eliminated. This might also be the reason why the really substantial differences of doctrinal opinion between the two faith communions involved were not dealt with in depth in these two preliminary presentations. To ascertain these differences, one has to consult the third chapter of TCUC where some of the final results of the second phase of the dialogue have been reported. As will be indicated later in this chapter, some of these divergences include issues pertaining to the continuity of the one church of Christ, ministerial order and the ecclesial nature of non-Catholic churches (TCUC 2000:para. 120–137).

It was nevertheless important for the dialogue to proceed satisfactorily that each of the churches involved was afforded the opportunity to explain its view on the origin and after-effects of the 16th-century Reformation. In discussing these presentations in this chapter, I do not attend to them successively by first dealing with the one and then with the other but rather concurrently in order to make possible comparison.

The Reformed presentation (TCUC 2000:para. 17–32) starts by emphasising the fact I mentioned already, namely that it was never the intention of the Reformation to set up a new church. As a result of generally recognised malpractices, the Reformers merely

wanted 'to reorder the life, practice and institutions of the church in conformity with the Word of God revealed in Scripture' (TCUC 2000:para. 18). It is interesting to note that the Reformed presentation does not provide a detailed description of these malpractices while the Roman Catholic report does so. Some of the issues mentioned in this latter report are, for example, the venality and often ostentatious wealth of some of the clergy, the neglect of pastoral duties and pastoral malpractice through misleading teaching about the efficacy of certain rites and rituals (TCUC 2000:para. 34).

Furthermore, the same Catholic report also adds that it was not only the Reformers who demanded change but that in the Roman Catholic Church itself certain reforming initiatives were in progress. It also points out that these reformatory measures in the Catholic Church were motivated by two different types of ecclesiological considerations and publications. The first type consisted of apologetical and polemical works, dealing with church order that arose out of conflicts between popes and either bishops or secular leaders (TCUC 2000:para. 38). From a juridical and political point of view, the arguments used in these works might have been effective, but as defence against the Reformation, they were inadequate because they failed to utilise convincing considerations of a biblical and theological nature while this was exactly the point emphasised by the Reformers. For the Reformers, the main issue was the doctrine regarding justification through faith alone. It were the ecclesiological implications of this doctrine through which the salvational primacy of the Catholic Church had been challenged that was the main focus of the Reformation (Weinrich 1998:67).

These arguments, however, do not imply that ecclesiological considerations of a theological nature were entirely absent in the Catholic Church of the 16th century. I have already alluded to the fact that, in addition to a first type of reformatory argument, a second type was also employed by the Catholics. Although this second type was indeed theological in nature, it was never extensively and systematically reflected in documents and policy statements. It mainly consisted of unreflected assumptions that had a subliminal effect on the convictions and attitudes of many people. These assumptions have to be taken into account when an attempt is made to explain Catholic resistance to the Reformation (TCUC 2000:para. 39). Some of the assumptions in this regard mentioned by the Catholic delegation to the second phase of the dialogue of the Reformed and Catholic Churches are the following:

1. Christ founded the church and established the position of apostle as a principle in terms of which authority and continuity would be guaranteed. This can be regarded as the basis of the episcopal order of ministry in the church. In this order, the Petrine ministry performed by the bishop of Rome would be afforded permanent primacy.
2. Christ wanted unity. Enduring doctrinal consensus would be the sign of the presence of Christ and the Spirit in the church.
3. Although the church accepted the authority of Scripture, it was emphasised that the church came into existence before the writings of the NT and that it therefore had the right to act as authoritative interpreter of Scripture especially when assembled in council.

In order to gain a clear understanding of the present-day dynamics of the ecumenical encounter between the Reformed and the Catholics, one now has to look at the ecclesiological response of the 16th-century Reformers to the Catholic assumptions of that time. The main elements of that response are the following (TCUC 2000:para. 18–19):

1. The sole headship belongs to Jesus Christ who governs the church through the Word in the power of the Spirit.
2. One finds the one universal visible church where the Word of God is truthfully proclaimed and the two dominical sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper faithfully administered.
3. The first two elements imply the importance of a proper church order in terms of which an official ministry of Word, sacrament and oversight is instituted. The first two of these functions are performed by ministers of the Word and the third by elders.

The main aim of these affirmations was to ensure that the unique mediatorship of Christ was emphasised unambiguously and that the church was not given an excessive role alongside him. One of the implications of this position was that the Reformers resisted the notion that the continuity of the church throughout the ages could be guaranteed by a sacramentally determined episcopal succession. As a consequence of this approach, the Reformers also denied that tradition could be seen on a par with Scripture. They furthermore denied the universal authority of the pope and the claim that councils constitute an infallible teaching authority (TCUC 2000:para. 22, 56). According to them, the continuity of the church is based on God's faithfulness enacted in the proclamation and hearing of the Word (Cochrane 1965:81–96; Smit 2013:231–245; Von Allmen 1964:424–444).

The two sets of affirmations that have now been listed are not matters of free-floating theological opinion. They represent two sets of seriously held convictions originating in two entirely different views of the church. The traditional Roman Catholic view saw the church as an institution founded by Christ as a sacramental institute of salvation physically presenting Christ to the world. This is a position which according to the Reformers gave rise to the various malpractices mentioned earlier on while also being in opposition to the testimony of Scripture (TCUC 2000:para. 99). The Reformers were convinced that the continuous resistance against their proposals for reformation was based on disobedience to God and the truth of the gospel (TCUC 2000:para. 21). Reconciling these two opposing views of the church would at a later stage pose a major challenge to healing the rift that had developed. Although it was not the intention of the Reformers to set up a new church, the alienation between the two faith communities gradually took on proportions that proved to be insurmountable. By the time the Council of Trent (1545–1563) convened for the first of its three sessions, the opposing positions had become so hardened and embittered that reconciliation was impossible, humanly speaking. This council in any case did not take a clear stand on ecclesiological matters because of the wide range of opinions in this regard that were represented there (TCUC 2000:para. 40–47).

The rift that had developed was exacerbated, if not actually partly caused, by the fact that the Reformation took place in a time of radical intellectual, cultural and political upheaval. The basic religious nature of the Reformation was embedded in a complex process of cultural reorientation that contributed to the development of the modern Western world view via the Renaissance and humanism (TCUC 2000:para. 24). The tendency towards subjectivism that originated in this way gave rise to two further developments which had far-reaching implications for the history of the church. The first is the emergence during the 17th century of modern biblical criticism which developed rapidly in the 18th and 19th centuries (Scholder 1966:15–33). The development of a critical attitude did not only influence the character of biblical hermeneutics, but it also had political implications. While the Protestant approach favoured the development of democratic societal systems, the Catholic attitude was in favour of hierarchically arranged ecclesiastical and political structures. As this turn to the subject was a development that initially had its main effect in Protestant contexts, it was evident that, when a strong anti-modernist attitude became prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church during the 19th century, culminating in the first Vatican Council with its infallibility doctrine and leading to the anti-modernist crisis in the early 20th century, a situation came about in which even further alienation was difficult to avoid (Schwaiger 1970:11–30).

An additional problem that arose from the modern tendency towards subjectivism and that had a negative impact on the relationship between the Reformed and the Catholics was the fact that Reformed churches tended to be involved in a continuous process of further division and subdivision on matters of theological or ecclesiological principle. This was a situation which would obviously obstruct any attempt at reconciliation (TCUC 2000:para. 48).

The problem of plurality in the Reformed tradition was, however, not exclusively related to issues of doctrinal principle. It was also a matter of hermeneutical contingency. Due to the influence of the missionary movement of the last two centuries the Reformed churches expanded and spread to many countries outside of Europe and especially to Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific. This movement brought them into contact with a multiplicity of new cultures. The experience of an extreme state of plurality which was developing stimulated the need to find some mechanism to give expression to the commonly felt identity and calling to jointly uphold and propagate the gospel. Accordingly, the Reformed churches had already started ecumenical activities in the 19th century. This led to the formation of the Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1875 (TCUC 2000:para. 26).

It became increasingly apparent to the Reformed community that, while the Reformation of the 16th century might have been necessary from a theological and historical perspective, centuries-old answers are not always sufficient to deal with later questions (TCUC 2000:para. 31, 53). This led to a certain openness towards the Catholic tradition. In the Catholic context, the development was different. In the aftermath of the

reactionary 19th century, the Magisterium continued reacting negatively to the slowly developing ecumenical movement. This was clearly demonstrated by Pope Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium Animos* of 1928 which gave a very negative assessment of ecumenical encounters. This approach persisted as late as 1950 in Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani Generis* (O'Malley 2008:18).

Outside of the formal church context, however, contact between the Reformed and Catholic Christians gradually started developing. This occurred especially in academic circles. New scientific theories and the application of literary and historical criticism to the Scriptures posed challenges to some of the fundamental tenets of the Christian religion. In an attempt to meet these challenges in a responsible manner, scholars were increasingly drawn together in international academic organisations in which academic eminence was beginning to transcend denominational interests. In this process, two important facts were discovered, namely that doctrinal differences which had been regarded as distinguishing features between churches were often present within a single church and that misunderstanding of the other's position was often the cause of some important theological differences. The possibility of removing at least some of the root causes of disagreement through dialogue began to appear (Jay 1978:81).

As the 20th century progressed, an attitude of increasing openness gradually grew in the Catholic Church as well. One of the implications of this development was that, in theology, alternative methods were being implemented in addition to the traditional scholastic method. These methods were especially aimed at dealing with the historical nature of reality. As far as ecclesiology as such is concerned, Catholicism gradually experienced a move away from issues of an exclusively institutional and juridical nature to considerations of a more fundamentally theological character (Mettepenningen 2010:27). The importance of the proclamation of the gospel and a Christ-orientated spirituality as propagated by a theologian like Romano Guardini increasingly found a ready response (Gerl 1984:275). At the same time, the notion of the invisibility of the church came to the fore while the idea of the church as the mystical body of Christ was being emphasised (Jonker 1955:77–108).

These motives were absorbed and intensified in an influential movement called the *Nouvelle Théologie* (Berkouwer 1965; Mettepenningen 2009, 2010; Schoof 1968). In spite of initially being rejected by the authorities in the decades preceding the Second Vatican Council, it in fact played a decisive role in developing the ecclesiology of this council as can clearly be seen in documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*. Regarding this council, the Catholic delegation to the second phase of the dialogue with the Reformed remarked, '[e]ven the most prophetic could not have predicted that the council would provide what turned out to be a pervasive reorientation in Roman Catholic liturgy, life, theology and thought' (TCUC 2000:para. 54). With this new approach to ecclesiological issues, a new era in ecumenical relationships dawned.



The term ‘*Aggiornamento*’, which means bringing up to date, did not only refer to the basic motive of the Second Vatican Council, but it was also applicable to the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed churches (TCUC 2000:para. 58).

## ■ Ecclesiology and Christology

The restoration of ecumenical relations between divided or separated churches presupposes that the churches involved are willing and able to clearly identify what the dividing factors in each particular case are. Serious attempts then have to be made to solve these issues that divide the churches. The reverse side of this approach is that the relevant churches should strive to find common theological ground and a common expression of faith that can serve as a basis for the desired rapprochement. The various phases of the dialogue between the Reformed and Catholic churches clearly confirmed that, in spite of ecclesiological differences between them, common ground could be found in their common commitment to Jesus Christ. This was especially emphasised in the second phase of this dialogue which, as we have seen, resulted in the document ‘Towards a common understanding of the church’. In the second chapter of this document, the dialogue partners went as far as not only recording Christological agreement on a theological text but even to declaring their willingness to articulate their commonly held faith in Christ in the form of a common confession of faith (TCUC 2000:para. 64–88).

When common commitment to Christ is given expression with such a degree of intensity and unanimity, one cannot avoid asking whether the factors keeping the relevant churches divided are really of a church-dividing nature. In order to find an answer to this question, one first has to investigate the basis and content of this commonly held commitment to Christ. This will be attempted under the present heading. The next step will be to ascertain what this commitment to Christ entails for the manner in which Reformed and Catholic Christians deal with the problem posed by their divergent ecclesiologies. This will be the task of the next paragraph of this chapter.

It is ecumenically important to take note of the fact that Reformed and Catholic Christians together unanimously confirm that both the fact and the content of their faith in Christ is based on their common acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures as *norma normans* and of the classical Nicene and Chalcedonian doctrines as *norma normata* (TCUC 2000:para. 67; PCCW 1984:para. 25–38). Jointly, these two faith communities therefore confess that, through the testimony of the Scriptures as attested to by the classical confessions, they are brought to faith in Christ. They also confess that Christ, through his obedience and perfect sacrifice, achieves our reconciliation with God. Reconciliation with God in turn, is the presupposition of reconciliation among human beings. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation are interdependent (TCUC 2000:para.71). The



weight which TCUC accords this point is clearly meant to provide a convincing argument for doing away with unnecessary divisions in the church (Witte 1994:101).

It is furthermore relevant to take cognisance of the manner in which they deal with the idea of reconciliation. Reformed and Catholics jointly emphasise the following (TCUC):

[J]ust as God is unique, the Mediator and Reconciler between God and humankind is unique and that the fullness of reconciliation is entire and perfect in Him. Nothing and nobody could replace or duplicate, complete or in any way add to the unique mediation accomplished once for all by Christ. (para. 72)

It will be clear that, with this emphasis, the motive of synergism, which has had a negative effect on Reformed-Catholic relations for a very long time, was decisively removed.

A related point of convergence that gradually developed between the dialogue partners was that both agreed that it is through faith that believers participate in the justification of sinners as a totally gratuitous work accomplished by God in Christ. It is important to realise, however, that the justification mentioned here is a double justification (Lane 2002:33). On the one hand, it refers to the objective fact of being justified in the sight of God. On the other hand, it refers to the fact that it is not only believers themselves who are justified but that their works are also justified. Faith is never without works, but works are not the basis of our justification. Believers do not only participate in the righteousness of Christ but also in his holiness. TCUC can therefore conclude, '[a]nd so justification by faith brings with it the gift of sanctification' (TCUC 2000:para. 79).

A vital step in the growing rapprochement between Reformed and Catholic believers is the insight that justification is normally not acquired in isolation but in the community of believers. Christ is present in the church that is acting in the proclamation of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments and prayers and intercession for the world. The question that now comes to the fore, however, concerns the implications of the presence of Christ for the way in which one sees the church and the extent to which Reformed and Catholic believers agree or disagree in this regard.

## ■ From diverging to converging models of the church

It is clear from what has been said thus far that the two faith communities agree that the salvation which has been brought about by Christ is mediated by the church. Justification by grace through faith is given us in the church. They also jointly emphasise that the mediation exercised by the church is not of such a nature as to complement Christ's perfect gift of grace or to constitute a reality operating independently from the gift of grace given to the church. Where the gospel is proclaimed with integrity and the sacraments administered faithfully, there the living Christ is acting through the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing about and maintaining the church (TCUC 2000:para. 86).

While a significant degree of convergence has been growing in the manner in which Christological and soteriological notions were being applied to ecclesiology, one, however, does notice that, with reference to the twofold means of grace, namely word and sacraments, two seemingly divergent models of the church are still operative in the Reformed and Catholic churches, respectively. Progress made in the ecumenical dialogues can therefore be measured by ascertaining the degree to which convergence in the use of these models take place. I, firstly, briefly analyse the two models and then attend to the issue of divergence and convergence.

The model of the church normally associated with the Reformed tradition and not very familiar to Roman Catholics is that of the church as *creatura verbi* (De Mey 2008:42). To gain a clear understanding of what this model entails, one should start by taking note of the terminology employed. The model is known as ‘creature of the Word’ and not ‘creature of Scripture’. This is not to see Word and Scripture in opposition to each other or to deny that the Word comes to the believer in Scripture. Rather, it is to emphasise that the Word of God is more than mere text. It is Scripture in action through the Holy Spirit (Huijgen 2017:47). This is an approach which has been developed in Reformed thinking in a characteristic manner, keeping in mind that the Reformation originated from the insight that human beings cannot reach God by their own initiative. They can only find God on the basis of having already been found by God. For the Reformers, God was not an abstract and obscure reality, a *deus absconditus*, but the triune God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, a *deus revelatus*. Therefore, for them, this awareness was related to Luther’s pivotal discovery that the righteousness of God to which Romans 1:17 refers is not an abstract divine command with which humans have to comply to attain salvation. It is rather the conviction that that righteousness is achieved by Christ’s substitutional death on the Cross. Appropriation of this salvific event through faith leads to the justification of the sinner (McGrath 1995:94–95). The Reformers were convinced that, if this was the basic message of Scripture, it meant that the Bible did not primarily constitute a law that has to be obeyed but a gospel that entails good news. Furthermore, the only appropriate response to good news is not formal obedience or abstract speculation but faith through which one is able to participate existentially in this good news.

This reversal in the interpretation of Romans 1:17 proved to be an exegetical discovery with far-reaching hermeneutical and theological implications. These implications were elaborated in the Reformed doctrine regarding the clarity of Scripture (Rossouw 1963:159). One of the prominent characteristics of this doctrine is the distinction it draws between the outward and inward clarity of Scripture (Schwöbel 1989:123). The outward clarity implies that the words of Scripture clearly and unambiguously attest to the grace which God in Christ gives to humanity. It is the proclamation of this Word by which the church is called into being. The nature of this Word furthermore implies that the proclamation or preaching cannot be regarded as merely the impartation of facts. In addition, it also functions as a message with the character of a promise. The Holy Spirit confirms the veracity and validity

of these promises in the lives of believers and in this way leads them to a life of commitment to God and their fellow believers. This constitutes the internal clarity of the message proclaimed in the outward clarity of biblical preaching. These core insights result in the conclusion that Reformed ecclesiology is closely related to the Reformed doctrines of the authority of Scripture and the origin of faith (Schwöbel 1989:117, 149, 151). Where faith is created by the Word of God, the church originates and exists.

In its attempt to explain this state of affairs, TCUC, without explicitly mentioning his name, refers to the well-known distinction which Karl Barth employs in this regard (TCUC 2000:para. 97). Barth (1932:89–128) distinguishes between the incarnated, inscripturated and proclaimed Word. In terms of this distinction, one could say that Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Cor 3:11), which, in turn, is created and sustained through the inscripturated and proclaimed Word (1 Cor 1:21). To all three of these dimensions of the Word, the Holy Spirit is closely related.

The basic intention of calling the church *creatura verbi* is to emphasise that, just as Christ is the living Lord, the Word is the living Word. Nevertheless, from time to time, the situation may occur in Reformed faith communities as well that the living Word is reduced to institutional structures, customs or doctrinal propositions. In such situations, it is also necessary to emphasise anew that *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. A church which calls itself *creatura verbi* has to live consistently *ex auditu*.

The second model in terms of which the nature and calling of the church is discussed in the ecumenical dialogues between the Reformed and the Catholics is that of the church as sacrament. Because this is a model normally associated with Catholic ecclesiology, it was virtually unknown in Reformed circles until very recently. Even in the Catholic context, the idea of the church as *sacramentum gratiae* only became widely used after having been included in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>75</sup> Although this term occurs in the Vatican documents nine times, it was the use of it in *Lumen Gentium* 1 that proved to be especially influential. Like so many other innovative developments that came to the fore at Vatican II, the use of the term *sacramentum gratiae* with reference to the church was an insight that gained prominence in the two decades before the council in the work of the movement that was given the name *Nouvelle Théologie* (Berkouwer 1965:217–237; Koffeman 1986:79–102; Mettepenningen 2009, 2010). Quite a number of authors made a contribution in this regard. A few of the names that could be mentioned are Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx and Otto Semmelroth. Recent research indicated that it was especially the German theologian Otto Semmelroth who made the most decisive contribution (Doyle 2015:203–225). Since Vatican II, this model has been further developed by Catholic theologians like Walter Kasper (1976:11–55, 1987:237–254, 2011:126–129),

75. *Lumen Gentium* 1, 9 and 48; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 5 and 26; *Ad gentes* 1 and 5; *Gaudium et Spes* 42 and 45.

Medard Kehl (1979:155–180, 1994:82–84), Ton van Eijk (2000:92–139) and Jürgen Werbick (1994:407–427).

To appreciate the ecumenical potential of this model of the church, one has to take a closer look at the manner in which *Lumen Gentium* 1 refers to it. One has to keep in mind that it only surfaced in the two decades preceding Vatican II although it was a notion, as will become clear shortly, that had already been used in the early church (Van de Beek 2012:21; TCUC 2000:para. 103). *Lumen Gentium* 1 states that the church is ‘*in Christo veluti sacramentum seu signum et instrumentum intimae cum Deo unionis ...*’ [in Christ as it were a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God]. In his explanation of this phrase, Joseph Ratzinger (1982:46) emphasised that one has to take note that the word ‘sacrament’ is introduced here with circumspection and a qualifying ‘*veluti*’ [as it were], thus characterising the usage as figurative. Closer scrutiny reveals that the application of the category sacrament to the church in this instance is analogical in a twofold sense.

To understand the first manner in which this is applied, one should remember that the term ‘sacramentum’ was used to translate the biblical Greek notion of *mysterion* and furthermore that the apostle Paul had already referred to the Christ event as mystery (1 Cor 2:7; Eph 1:9; Col 2:2, 4:3). At a later stage, Augustine would say ‘[t]here is no other mystery of God than Christ’ (TCUC 2000:para. 104). When Vatican II therefore refers to the church ‘as in some way a sacrament’, it implies that, by some means, the church brings about the presence of Christ. The church is the sacrament of Christ. To fully grasp the sense in which this term functioned at Vatican II, one should recall that Otto Semmelroth, whose work was influential in the drafting of the documents of Vatican II, was accustomed to emphasise that Christ is the ‘*Ursakrament*’ (Doyle 2015:203). To this, Henri de Lubac (1986:147) added ‘[i]n this world the church is the sacrament of Christ, as Christ Himself, in his humanity is for us the sacrament of God.’ The basic intention of all these statements is that the church is dependent on and subjected to Christ. On the one hand, the notion of the church as sacrament is intended to indicate that the eschatological salvation which God has in mind for humankind is already embryonically present in the world. On the other hand, this notion is indicative of the fact that the church has a vital role to play in mediating salvation. Christ uses the church as an instrument to present salvation to the world by means of the proclamation of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and the establishment of a Christian style of life (CCCW 2007:para. 194; TCUC 2000:para. 108). The church as sacrament is both the result and instrument of salvation (Van Vliet 2001:101).

In the first place, the analogical application of the category sacrament to the church refers to the relationship between Christ and the church. In the second place, comparing the church with a sacrament bears in mind the manner in which the sacraments function in the church. The Greek patristic authors had already referred to baptism and the

Eucharist as mysteries and as means through which the presence of Christ in the world is confirmed (TCUC 2000:para. 106). Calling the church a sacrament implies that Christ, through the church, is present in a special way in order to provide salvation to the world. The validity of this statement depends on the manner in which this presence is conceptualised. If it is done in terms of the metaphysical ontology, characteristic of scholasticism in which the presence of Christ is seen as a reality physically available in the world, it would constitute a position which is not reconcilable with the church as *creatura verbi*. Such a scholastically conceptualised ecclesiology would also be one which is based on a Christology which is one-sidedly and exclusively developed in incarnational terms (Witte 1994:108–112). In contradistinction to such an approach, one notices that the Christology on which the *Nouvelle Théologie* before the Second Vatican Council based its ecclesiology has a strong salvation-historical, pneumatological and eschatological nature (Mettepenningen 2010:141–145). Where an ecclesiology is developed along these lines, it would be possible to see the presence of Christ as related to the proclamation of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. Should the notion of the church as sacrament be described in this way, it would be compatible with the idea of the church as *creatura verbi*.

That such a development is not a purely hypothetical possibility is proven by one of the preliminary results reached during the second phase of the dialogue. The two participating delegations were able to reach the common conclusion that the two models of the church which, in the past, were used to signify divergence can in fact be seen as two sides of the same coin. They represent two different but nevertheless complementary ways of giving expression to the instrumental character of the church (TCUC 2000:para. 113).

## ■ The church and the kingdom of God

The two faith communities decided to consolidate and deepen this point of convergence in the third phase of their dialogue. The manner in which they undertook to do so was by together demonstrating that the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God can be used to confirm the compatibility which had been discovered between the two models. Each of these models can be employed to emphasise one of two equally valid and complementary dimensions of the way in which the church should serve the coming of God's kingdom in the world (CCCW 2007:para. 17–20, para. 190–193; TCUC 2000:para. 113).

According to biblical teaching, the term 'kingdom of God' refers to God's gracious, faithful and righteous involvement in his Creation which leads to a world characterised by righteousness, peace and joy (Rm 14:17). Whoever desires the coming of the kingdom has to work and pray for this reality and live according to its values (CCCW 2007:para. 190). In the NT, the kingdom of God is described in temporal rather than in spatial terms. Jesus's entrance into the world constituted a pivotal dimension of the coming of God's kingdom (Biezeveld 2000:46; Snyman 1977:198). The final consummation of the kingdom,

however, belongs to the future. In the meantime, the church serves the kingdom by revealing something of this kingdom within itself and by proclaiming, promoting and celebrating the new relationship to God which Christ made available to humanity (Heyns 1967:1; Van Wyk 2015).

Through the ages, the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God has been conceptualised in different ways. One of the basic approaches during the patristic era was that of the church looking forward to the fulfilment of the kingdom within the historical process at the end of time. With the adoption of Christianity as state religion in the 4th century, Eusebius of Caesarea developed the theory that the kingdom of God could be found in the harmonious cooperation between church and state. In the early 5th century, when Augustine, experiencing the political threat posed by the Barbarians, wrote his book *The city of God*, he came to the conclusion that the kingdom of God is present in the church, the heavenly city which lives in constant struggle with the sinful earthly city. During the middle ages, the notion of identifying the kingdom with the church, in which the ecclesiastical hierarchy played a decisive role, gained ascendancy (CCCW 2007:para. 49–51). The Reformation brought a slight but significant change in this regard. The Reformers emphasised the spiritual and invisible nature of the kingdom of God. The church represents the spiritual reign that Christ exercises through the proclamation of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. This is, however, a gradual process, the finalisation of which lies in an undisclosed future (Heidelberg Catechism 48/123; Wolf 1961:918–924).

Taking into account all these considerations regarding the relationship between church and kingdom, the partners came to the joint conclusion that they are now able to confirm the agreement reached in the second phase of their dialogue namely that *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* are complementary and not mutually exclusive models for describing the origin and calling of the church. In the first instance, they emphasise that the church is related to the Word in a twofold sense. On the one hand, the church is created through the response of faith to the proclaimed Word regarding the incarnated Word that proclaimed that the kingdom was near. On the other hand, the response of faith leads the believing community to proclaim the Word of Salvation which liberates believers both to live according to and witness to the kingdom values that Jesus taught. ‘In its mission as servant to the kingdom, the church shows itself to be the *creatura verbi* in both of these ways’ (CCCW 2007:para. 190). In the second instance, as *sacramentum gratiae*, it can further be explained as sacrament of the kingdom (CCCW 2007:para. 194; TCUC 2000:para. 111). The church does not only proclaim the kingdom, but in its life, liturgy and existence, it represents the kingdom and therefore sacramentally brings about God’s gracious, faithful and righteous involvement in his creation. ‘To the extent that the church is an instrument intended by God to serve in bringing about the kingdom, it must be an instrument of grace’ (CCCW 2007:para. 191). This is precisely what is meant by the expression *sacramentum gratiae*.

The significant achievement of the second and third phases of the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue is that it became possible to conclude that both faith communities can associate themselves with both these models as they have been jointly described. They even go as far as stating the following about these two approaches (CCCW 2007; Kasper 2009:69):

[*They*] are not only mutually informative and complementary but also ... neither is fully adequate without the other. A 'sacramental' church that does not give proper place to the Word of God would be essentially incomplete; a church that is truly creation of the Word will celebrate the Word liturgically and sacramentally. (para. 193)

Relating the two models to the kingdom of God has assisted in elucidating their complementarity and compatibility. However, discussing the two models in the light of the kingdom of God also contributed to developing a greater degree of convergence as far as the manner is concerned in which the two faith communities view the kingdom of God. The traditional position as still mentioned by TCUC was that Reformed and Catholics did not think in the same way about the kingdom of God. The Reformed used to insist more on the promise of a 'not yet' while Catholics tended to give more emphasis to the 'already there' of the kingdom (TCUC 2000:para. 122). Being able to affirm the complementarity of the two models would assist Reformed and Catholics to overcome the traditional divergence in this respect by jointly emphasising the simultaneous validity of both the 'already there' and the 'not yet' dimensions of the kingdom.

This development had the further advantage of Reformed and Catholics overcoming another previously held mutual suspicion. In the past, Reformed believers often thought that Catholic believers attributed to the church a role that belongs to Christ only. The Roman Catholic believers for their part commonly suspected Reformed believers of not accepting that Christ is truly present and acting in his church (TCUC 2000:para. 112). By agreeing on the simultaneous validity of the *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* dimensions of the church, Catholic Christians accepted that the presence of Christ is not automatic but eschatologically related to the work of the Holy Spirit while Reformed Christians again recalled that Calvin already emphasised that the church is where the Word is not only faithfully preached but also heard. Hearing the Word would imply its embodiment in the church (Smit 2013:233).

## ■ Conclusion

There can be no doubt that ecumenical progress has been made during the series of ecumenical dialogues between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches. The ecclesiological notions in both communities have been enriched by the encounters with each other. To what extent the fundamental theological gains that have been discussed in this chapter can be translated into institutional rapprochement is, however, unclear and will depend on the reception that these insights receive in official church contexts (Zamfir 2008:85–102).



While the extent of ecclesial reception is not yet clear, a certain degree of theological acceptance seems to be developing. The Catholic ecumenical theologian Peter de Mey (2008:52), for example, reacts positively to the concept of the church as *creatura verbi*. He however indicates the following (De Mey 2008):

[W]e still have to wait for a document from Rome in which the image of the church as *creatura verbi* forms part of the Catholic teaching on the nature of the church. (p. 52)

The absence of a central authority renders it difficult if not impossible to ascertain to what extent the notion of the church as sacrament finds acceptance in Reformed churches. One does notice that an increasing number of Reformed theologians find this model useful in the development of their ecclesiologies. A few names that can be mentioned in this regard are Martien Brinkman (2008:308–319, 2010:327–343), Leo Koffeman (1986, 2005:209–222) and Bram van de Beek (2012:22–24). An interesting particularity in this regard is that the Reformed dogmatician Johan Heyns (1978:352–355) discussed the notion of the church as sign of the kingdom four decades ago already in a manner that exhibited remarkable similarity to current theological thought. However, as has been indicated above, the notion of the church as a sacrament has only fairly recently reappeared in theological discussions and is clearly in need of further investigation. I hope to make a contribution in this regard in a follow-up essay.

## ■ Summary: Chapter 9

Five hundred years is a long time. The separation between the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches that originated in the 16th century seems incomprehensible in the present-day context. While Reformed churches have been involved in ecumenical outreach since the 19th century, the Catholic Church only started participating in this process after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Since the 1970s, three extensive series of ecumenical dialogue have taken place between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in order to ascertain whether closer ties between them would be possible. The conversations resulted in three substantial report documents. This chapter investigates a few aspects of these documents in an attempt to determine the extent to which the traditional ecclesiologies of the faith communities involved have been influenced by these bilateral dialogues. The chapter discusses the reasons for the Reformation and the subsequent alienation between Reformed and Catholic believers as well as the Christological basis on which models of the church can be developed that might be conducive to a process of overcoming this age-old schism.



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This book discusses the scientific relevance of Reformed theology, specifically with regard to biblical, historical and systematic-theological themes. Comprising a collection of essays by scholars belonging to the Reformed tradition, it aims at examining the historical heritage of the Reformation, the current state of discourse in Reformed theology as well as the contemporary relevance of a Reformed approach to theology. It contains biblical, historical-theological and systematic-theological perspectives and addresses a variety of issues such as biblical interpretation, text criticism, translation, constructive impulses emanating from classical Reformed thought, Christian freedom, anthropology and dialogue with non-Reformed traditions.

It is well known that the Reformers such as Luther and Calvin followed the humanists of the sixteenth century by going back to the original languages of the Bible, reading the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. This approach had, and still has, important implications for the translation of the Bible in the broad Reformed tradition.

**Herculaas F. (Herrie) van Rooy, Professor Emeritus, School for Biblical Studies and Ancient Languages, North-West University**

Anno Domini 1516 was a year of important persons and significant events. Spiritual and philosophical developments in societies are often first recognised by and reflected in the visual arts. This innovative research investigates the state of Europe just prior to the beginning of the European Reformations. The author achieves the purpose by examining the contribution of four individuals: Hieronymus Bosch, Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More. The approach is masterful and comprehensive and gives a real sense of the context of Europe through the work of these four outstanding individuals. The author uses a combination of primary and secondary sources to produce a work that is both theological and historical.

**Graham Duncan, Professor Emeritus, Church History and Church Polity, University of Pretoria**

In the essay 'Fire in the bosom: Luther's liberty paradox "repeated forward"' the focus is on Luther's paradoxical understanding of the freedom event itself; then on paradoxical freedom's collapse in modernity; and, finally, on possibly triggering anew this freedom event by – to employ a theatrical metaphor – 'staging' it as an eschatological, theodramatic improvisation of Luther's paradox. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. It brought Luther's theology into a productive conversation with some of the themes pertinent to current discussions in continental philosophy (such as on 'the event', 'repetition', 'performativity'), as well as in theological discourse ('theodrama', 'anticipatory memory', 'eschatological surplus').

**Robert Vosloo, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Stellenbosch University**

